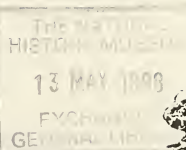




Number 61

THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK



May 1998

The quarterly bulletin of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

1998 PROGRAMME

With this issue of Natterjack you will receive the programme card for the following 12 months. We have started a month earlier than in the past to make it easier for the Norwich branch of the Norfolk Wildlife Trust (NWT), the RSPB and ourselves to prevent clashes of dates. The purpose of these notes is to expand the details of some of the meetings where lack of space precludes it on the card.

Sunday 17th May

Details in last Natterjack.

Wednesday 3rd June

Marston Marsh is a Norwich Local Nature Reserve in the River Yare valley, south of Norwich between the A140 and the A11. This marsh, with its network of dykes, is grazed by cattle during the summer. The car park is on Marston Lane off the A140 opposite the Post House Hotel. It is small so suggest sharing cars if possible. TG 217057.

Sunday 14th June

Ashwellthorpe Lower Wood is an NWT Reserve. It is ancient semi-natural woodland on boulder clay. Trees include alder, ash, oak, hazel, hornbeam, field maple, holly, elm, hawthorn and blackthorn. Shrubs include dogwood, guelder rose and spindle.

Parking is in the Warden's meadow, just past a wood yard in the middle of the village. Do not try to use the old entrance. TM 142977.

We plan to visit again in September and April to see the woods throughout the seasons.

Sunday 28th June

Hickling Broad is a National Nature Reserve as well as an NWT Reserve. It has a large broad, fen, dykes, scrape and grazing marsh. Good for swallowtail butterflies, dragonflies and a good range of plants and birds. Toilets available.

This is one of two meetings associated with Wildlife 2000. Several parties will head off in different directions. Come and see recorders in action and follow your own interests. It will be an enjoyable day.

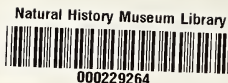
Follow the brown tourist signs from Hickling. The reserve entrance is in 3 km. TG 428222.

Sunday 5th July

Buxton Heath Open Day, 1030 hrs to 1630 hrs. Everybody welcome. Car park at TG 173214, on Heath Road off B1149. Go down narrow track to left opposite first house.

Tuesday 21st July

This indoor meeting and the field meeting on 30th August are to introduce members to wading birds. You don't have to attend both but I think you would find it useful. This is an extra indoor meeting. We have been fortunate, due to some skilful negotiating by your Programme Secretary, in getting the Music Room at no extra cost, so come and see this magnificent room.



Sunday 26th July

Upton Fen is an NWT Reserve and is one of the finest open fens with dykes, pools and woodland in the county. Good for swallowtails, dragonflies, round leaved wintergreen, sedges and bryophytes. Upton Fen is 1.5 km east of South Walsham. Take minor road through Pilson Green to Low Farm. Car park on right. TG 379137.

This is a joint meeting with our colleagues of the Great Yarmouth Naturalists' Society.

Sunday 16th August

Chippenham Fen is a National Nature Reserve. It is a Breckland valley fen just off the A11, just before it joins the A14 Newmarket by-pass, and includes old peat diggings, unimproved wet meadows and old planted woodlands. Meet at TL 652692. Leave A11 at junction with B 1085, signed Chippenham, just before the junction with the Newmarket bypass. This is the old A11 through Red Lodge which crosses over the A11 east of Chippenham. Turn left in Chippenham and at tee junction turn right into track. Park at side of track between Park Farm and reserve after Phantom Cottages.

Sunday 23rd August

Thompson Common, an NWT Reserve, consists of pingoes, grassland and woods.

This is one of two meetings associated with Wildlife 2000. Several parties will head off in different directions. Come and see recorders in action and follow your own interests. It will be an enjoyable day.

The car park is at TL 943967. Leave Watton on the A1075 Thetford road and travel for about 8 km. The car park is on the right behind a large lay-by on the line of an old railway. If you come to the village of Stow Bedon you have gone too far.

Sunday 30th August

Titchwell is an RSPB Reserve with a large car park for which there is a charge of £3 if you are not a member. This is a follow-on from the indoor meeting on 21st July. TF 750438. Toilets available.

John Mott

MAGPIES FEEDING ON MUNTJAC CORPSE

On Sunday 1st February 1998, whilst travelling to Wroxham along the A1062 through the village of Horning, I saw two Magpies *Pica pica*, fly away from a large mammal corpse in a winter wheat field three metres from the road edge. On stopping the car to investigate I was amazed to see that the Magpies were feeding on a dead Muntjac *Muntiacus muntjak*. The deer was lying on its right side and the magpies had eaten right through the left side exposing the deer's rib cage. The deer was obviously a road casualty and had either been hit as it ran across the road and then died, or was placed there by the person who had hit it. I somehow think it was the former as the deer was not badly damaged proving that it may have been hit by a glancing blow and then died of shock. The corpse was fresh, as there was no evidence of the mammal decomposing. Although I have seen Magpies feeding on carrion before I have never seen them eating a Muntjac. It was like Vultures at the corpse of an African Lion.

Colin Jacobs

CAT BASKET UNDER ATTACK

Getting our cane cat-basket (which we have had for at least ten years) out of a cupboard recently, I found it sitting in what looked like fine sand. Closer inspection showed this to be wood-dust, and we then realised that the cane was riddled with fairly substantial (2 mm diameter) holes. We had recourse to that invaluable book **Wildlife in House and Home** (Collins, 1977), and found details of a South-east Asian long horn beetle *Chlorophorus annularis*, notorious for damaging bamboo houses.

Imported canes can contain the larvae, whose development takes several years. In our case, there was no sign of the adult beetles, much to Ken Durrant's disappointment. They must have flown and, very fortunately for us, they will attack no other timber!

Paul Banham

FELIS CONCOLOR, A FIRST FOR NORFOLK?

New species to our county are regularly being found by naturalists and scientific surveys. The Wildlife 2000 initiative is now a driving force behind those seeking new records and an incentive to those who would not normally submit their records. Would it not be grand if out of all this Norfolk could be the first county in Britain to record *Felis concolor*, the Puma, as an addition to its wild fauna?

Examining this possibility creates many questions regarding the recording of species which I feel are worth considering.

There is much talk of recording for posterity, for the generations to come. I hope this means for the sake of the generations of the species recorded yet to come. Unless recording can help other species survive the onslaught of our own I would suggest that it is an activity designed for our own pleasure. This is not wrong, but like so many things we do for pleasure it could get out of hand and needs keeping a wary eye on. I cite the Victorian, personal, corpse collections as an example where the individual creature is no better than a coin or stamp.

The first and most sacred quality of any record is that it must be accurate. There is no place for only ninety nine per cent accuracy.

To achieve this level of integrity the individual submitting a record must have two qualities. They must be in possession of sure knowledge, either in what they know themselves or that contained in literature that they have access to. (I would suggest that both knowledge and literature need to be continually monitored and questioned for accuracy). However, the most important quality of a recorder is total honesty. He or she must be prepared to sacrifice a precious record for that honesty. The honesty needed to admit a lack of knowledge or a less than certain identification of even a common or well known species. The integrity of the record reflects that of its recorder.

So what would convince the mammal recorder for Norfolk that a record of a wild-living Puma is one hundred per cent certain?

Would it be the proven knowledge and integrity of the person submitting the record? Would that person have to have referees as to those qualities? Would it be necessary for the animal to be caught and the identification witnessed? Would a film of the animal suffice or casts of paw prints or still photographs? All these may seem on first consideration to be enough, but are they? They are all still very much open to question.

Why is the Norfolk Puma so different from any other species? Records of other species are accepted with less scrutiny than as applied above and yet the integrity of every record must remain the same. Dare I suggest that identifying a Puma would be somewhat easier for almost everyone than separating a Starling from a Blackbird!

We are still at the stage of examining witness reports rather than submitting records. This has not been helped by sensationalist media attention which has gained for the beast the status of mysterious legend rather than a genuine but as yet unrecorded wild member of our fauna.

As a Norfolk Constabulary Wildlife Liaison Officer I have had the opportunity of hearing about almost all the sightings reported to the police. I have interviewed, using the latest interrogation techniques, many witnesses and have visited the vicinities of many sightings. I have attended a conference called by the Chief Constable on the subject which had representatives of virtually every possible interested body attending. I feel therefore that I probably have a fairly rounded view of the situation concerning this "phenomena".

If one assumes that witnesses are not lying, they tell convincing stories. Almost all describe seeing a large cat-like animal, usually black or dark brown, its size approximating that of an Alsatian dog. They describe a long, upward curving tail and sometimes a bounding gait. My own experience at 23.30 hours, near Acle, was exactly as described above. Some witnesses go further and describe facial patterns, pricked, small ears and thin appearance when viewed from the front. Some say "I saw a Puma!". My enquiries into the feasibility of a Puma living as nature intended in Norfolk lead me to believe it is quite possible. It could even be possible for a small breeding population to survive without preying on livestock, I am informed.

If the evidence available were put before a court, the jury would easily find a verdict of, "yes there is a large cat living in Norfolk". I do not believe they could assign that cat to a species. A jury's verdict is enough to send a man to prison for life on far less evidence than is needed to create a record for Wildlife 2000!

Anyone can be genuine but mistaken but there are many reasons why people lie. They lie for a brief appearance in the media, for a "laugh", or just for the gratification of "having one over" on someone else. The more convincing the person, the better

the lie and once you have lied you can never, ever go back on it and so it grows and grows. I am sure many big-cat sighting are lies. It only needs one to be true however!

It is clear to me that if small, static, habitat dependant species living in well studied areas, like the spider *Araneus marmoreus* in Foxley Wood or the slug *Limax cinereoniger* at Swanton Novers, can go unnoticed, how much more difficult it will be to create a true record of a shy, elusive, mobile, well camouflaged, mainly nocturnal animal like the Puma.

The creation of a record is the result of knowledge of a fact, a truth in other words. There is a difference between "to know" and "to believe". One can believe in what a lie tells you. I must throw my cards upon the table and say therefore that I believe there is a Puma out there but I know not if that is the truth.

If anyone is interested in creating this record and finding the beast I shall be glad to assist with the information I have. As an appetizer though, I would suggest a dawn vigil from the top of Reedham or Wickhampton church towers with telescope, walkie-talkie and video camera and a partner, mobile on the ground. This way you may solve a mystery and record a fact.



THE INTEGRITY OF THE RECORD REFLECTS THAT OF ITS RECORDER!

Garth. M. Coupland

TO ALL LOCAL NATURALISTS

As some of you will be aware, I have for the last 11-12 years been archiving and databasing the many writings of Ted Ellis. A very interesting occupation and very informative. All information is available for a small fee to all interested parties. My main project for the next year or two is to obtain copies of nature observations at Wheatfen SINCE Ted died (22/7/86) and I invite you all to send me what you can. All submissions will be acknowledged and (one day!) released to you all in some form or other. I can handle all forms of computer records on disk. If in doubt-ring, or if preferred write by hand or use the old steam typewriter!!

Thankyou

Chris Blenkiron, 143, Norwich Road, New Costessey, Norwich, NR5 OLD. Telephone 01603 744109, evenings
e-mail 100117.1137@compuserve.com

website:http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/ellis_nature_wheatfen_fungus

WALL PLANTS IN WEST NORFOLK

Society member Ron Payne has published a paper on the flora of walls in west Norfolk. For seven years he has studied the flowering plants and ferns on almost one thousand walls throughout the west of the county and listed four hundred and eighteen different species. In this paper the data gathered is analysed in various ways and comparisons are made with earlier surveys in other parts of England.

The paper is available from Mr.R. M. Payne, Applegate, Thieves Bridge Road, Watlington, King's Lynn, Norfolk. PE33 0HL. The price is £3, and all profits will go into the fund for publishing the new county flora now due to be published in 1999.

A BIRD CAKE WITH A DIFFERENCE

Have I made a breakthrough in the manufacture of Bird Cake?

Take 2 lb of pure lard (additive free). Dissolve it slowly over low heat. Add approximately the same weight of crushed oats or corn, (I use Haith's Song Bird Mix,) then add about 4oz of Gram Flour (a flour made from lentils). Mix well until stiff - adding more bulk to the fat if too loose-then fill 2 / 3 ins. basins with the mix and cool either in a cool spot or, if room in the fridge.

The cakes are proving extremely popular: apart from the regular customers - Starlings, Blackbirds, Tits of various types including the Long Tailed, Siskin, Greenfinch, Greater Spotted Woodpecker, I have actually enticed the Goldcrest from the nearby conifers to have a go. At first I was naturally a little concerned. However it came back for more two or three times over the next few days, so obviously it finds it palatable. Maybe the bird population have heard rumours of this "Indian food thing"!

Roger A. R. Clarke

I have heard of Bird Cake being put in a coconut half with a hole in the bottom with string knotted and threaded through so that it hangs upside down for Blue Tits. Colin

STRANGE BEHAVIOUR OF SISKINS

I am fortunate enough to have a small flock (12 approx) of Siskins feeding regularly on nuts and sunflower seeds, up to eight at any one time. Every so often all will stop feeding and freeze for periods of up to a minute whilst other birds present, Coal, Blue and Great Tits, Green Finches and House Sparrows will continue to feed quite normally. There are two multiple feeding areas out of sight of each other but in full view from where I sit and Siskins feeding in both areas will freeze simultaneously. I can only assume that there must be some sound that only they can hear.

A. P. Goodfellow February 1998

FEBRUARY 1998 SIGHTINGS

On 26th about 0830hrs I was walking through Stow Bedon and saw a Wood Mouse on the road edge. It looked in perfect condition but my gentle prodding failed to persuade it to move into the grass verge. Finally I scooped it up with my map case and deposited it onto the grass. It then crept under some leaves. Its deep brown eyes looked alert but I wondered if it had just woken up and wasn't quite "with us".

The same day I saw a flock of about 150 Chaffinches flitting around between Merton Wood and Lowster Hill in Peddars Way.

We live about a mile from Wayland Wood, and believe the Hawfinches which have visited our garden for 20 years come from there to feed off the nutlets under the Hornbeam. February's sighting were 2 males on 8th, 13th, 22nd and 1 female on 14th. Each visit was for water in the birdbath.

The most exciting February visitor was a male Sparrowhawk. We've never had one before and I couldn't believe my luck at seeing one so close. About mid-day on Friday 20th I heard a "thud" on the sitting room window. I crossed the room, looked

out and saw about a yard on the lawn a Sparrowhawk crouching over its victim. The Blackbird was on its back, the Sparrowhawk with its talons digging into its breast was bouncing up and down squeezing the life out of its victim. The Blackbird was making high pitched cries. When the Sparrowhawk started to pluck the breast feathers I tapped sharply on the window. It turned its head and stared at me, still keeping its wings arched over its prey. Then it returned to the plucking of the squeaking Blackbird. I went through 2 rooms, along the garden path and the hawk flew off low across the garden, skimming the fence with the hapless Blackbird in its talons. All that was left was a pile of soft black feathers.

Susan Pallister

MARRIOTT'S WAY - WEDNESDAY 25TH MARCH

On a wet, cool and windy morning I was delighted that six other members of the Society took the trouble to turn up. Fortunately the rain soon stopped and we enjoyed our two and a half hours meander along the old M.& G.N. railway line. This time we were not disturbed by a sponsored walk and met virtually nobody.

We identified 23 species of birds with perhaps the most surprising being a Woodcock . A singing Chiffchaff was a year tick for some of us, but we were unable to see it.

We meandered as far as the industrial complex where a lot of noise was emanating from what seems to be a car crushing plant. It was near here that we discovered what was for me the surprise of the morning, about 10 yards of the actual old track still in situe. This must be the only bit left!

This stretch of the track will be a good place for anybody interested in wild flowers, to walk in summer. Fourteen species were identified.

I have long been interested in Marriott's Way and frequently walk the Costessey stretch. I have some enthusiasm for steam trains and recall with affection, riding the line in my younger days. It is nearly 40 years since passenger traffic ceased. The County Council now wish to "improve" the track to encourage greater use and it is hoped that this will be done in a sensible manner to protect the wildlife.

I would like to add a postscript to my note in the last "Natterjack" in that Large White Butterfly caterpillars were on my Broccoli until 2nd February and one person reported having them on his, also in Costessey, on 8th February.

John Butcher

Please send items for August Natterjack before 1st July to Colin Dack, 12, Shipdham Road, Toftwood, Dereham, Norfolk. NR19 1JJ.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

Members who pay by cheque are reminded that subscriptions fell due on 1st April, 1998. Current rates are £10 for ordinary and family members and £15 for affiliated groups. Please make cheques payable to Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society and send them to:

**D. I. Richmond
42 Richmond Rise
Reepham
Norfolk NR10 4LS**

**From.....
Address.....
.....
.....**

S.296A



Number 62

THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK



August 1998
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HISTORY MUSEUM
27 AUG 1998
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The quarterly bulletin of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

PROGRAMME

Sunday 13 September

Holt Country Park is owned and managed by North Norfolk District Council and Holt Lowes is an NWT Reserve. Tony Leech, biology teacher from Greshams School, will lead the party around the site in the morning, mainly for fungi. In the afternoon there will be a chance to look at specific areas.

The car park is on the right of the Norwich to Holt road just south of Holt.
TG 081 375. Toilets available.

Tuesday 15 September

This talk continues our woodland theme.

Sunday 27 September

Ashwellthorpe Lower Wood is an NWT Reserve. It is ancient semi-natural woodland on boulder clay. Trees include alder, ash, oak, hazel, hornbeam, field maple, holly, elm, hawthorn and blackthorn. Shrubs include dogwood, guelder rose and spindle.

Parking is in the Warden's meadow, just past a wood yard in the middle of the village. Do not try to use the old entrance. TM 142 977.

This is the second visit to this reserve looking at it through the seasons. We plan to visit again in April. We have no winter meeting but the warden advocates visiting the day after fresh snow has fallen, to see foot prints.

Sunday 11 October

Wheatfen is reached through Surlingham village. Passing the school and the village pond you will come to a fork. Take the left fork down 'The Green' and continue a quarter mile. Turn sharp right into 'The Covey' and continue for half a mile. The road becomes a rough track. Continue another 300 yards and you will find Wheatfen car park on your left. TG 325 056.

Thursday 19 November

Marriott's Way is a seven mile path from Hellesdon to Attlebridge along the old M. & G.N. railway. We meet in the old station car park at Hellesdon on Marlpit Lane off the A47. TG 197 100.

Sunday 22 November

Buxton Heath is managed by Buxton Heath Wildlife Group in conjunction with the NWT. The heath is on a basin of acid sand with a chalky stream flowing through the centre. This gives a mixture of dry and wet heath with a valley mire in the middle and some woodland around the perimeter. It is one of the best areas for Sphagna in Norfolk. Robin Stevenson is the bryophyte recorder for Norfolk.

Car park at TG 173 214, on Heath Road off B1149. Go down narrow track to left opposite first house.

John Mott

NORFOLK BIRD & MAMMAL REPORT

David and Iris Paull have taken over responsibility for the sale and distribution of the annual Norfolk Bird & Mammal Report from Mary and Don Dorling .

They can be contacted by post at 8 Lindford Drive, Eaton, Norwich, NR4 6LT, or by telephone on 01603 457270.

Progress in producing the 1997 Report is on schedule. Publication is expected early in the Autumn and copies will be sent to all members of the Society and other regular subscribers as soon as they are available. Copies of the Reports for 1996 and many other prior years are still available. For details of price and availability, please contact David at the above address.

Don Dorling.

A NEW GALL FOR NORFOLK

At a meeting of the Wymondham WATCH group at New Buckenham Common I took a look at a lone alder tree planted next to the large pond in the centre of the common. It still had several of last year's seed cones hanging on some of the branches and on a few of the cones, stiff, curled, leaf-like appendages could be seen. These I recognised as being something I had seen a picture of in one of my books, so I collected a few and took them home.

From my book I identified them as a gall caused by the fungus *Exoascus alni-incanae* (Kuhn). Later that week I contacted Rex Hancy, on other matters, and mentioned what I had found – neither name or description rang any bells with him. So I took a sample to him.

His books, one in French and another in Dutch, gave the name as *Taphrina alni* (the new name for this species) and he confirmed it as a species new to Norfolk.



Two days later while talking to a neighbour in Wacton I saw several of these galls on a small lone alder planted by his gate! Since I have collected cones from this tree in previous years I am sure I have not overlooked these galls in the past.

Robert Maidstone

CHRISTMAS PRESENCE

Every now and again the everyday household chores are brightened up, particularly if the chore is washing up and the kitchen window overlooks the garden.

During such pre-Christmas activity (Dec. 21st 1997), while at home in Sheringham, Cherry noted a small bird on the neighbour's Silver Birch. Grabbing the binoculars for a closer look we were surprised to see that the bird was a Chiffchaff. The following day, whilst amongst the soap suds, I noted a "Starling" on a television aerial across the road. I looked again as the bird appeared to have a crest. Through the quickly focused binoculars the "Starling" revealed itself to be what I had subsequently suspected - a Waxwing. To have two such visitors when doing the chores almost makes such work worthwhile!

Francis and Cherry Farrow

A GAGGLE IN THE MIST

About 8.00am on the 29th December, 1997, while indoors at Sheringham, I became aware of the clamour of many geese overhead. The constant calling lasted a few minutes and was, I believe, that of Pinkfeet. Not one goose was to be seen, however, as the countryside was still bathed in thick fog. The geese, no doubt, were flying blind, although they seemed to be heading westwards. The number of geese involved must have been considerable from the amount of calling and I wonder if anyone spotted them.

Francis Farrow

I am sorry these two articles from Francis and Cherry are late. I mislaid them. They were meant for the February issue.

ARACHNOLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS

Whilst on night shift during May this year, I was admiring the superb specimens of *Larinioides scolopetarius* that spin their large, orb webs around the lights on the security building at the entrance to Cantley Sugar Factory. I marvelled at the way they had obviously chosen the light site because it attracted insects. Their webs were much cluttered with insect corpses of many and varied species.

However, alarm bells rang in my mind as I remembered that such assumptions about nature are usually made with a wondering human point of view and often very wrong. I decided I should investigate further.

Of course spiders build webs where there are no lights at all but this fact did not help prove or disprove my assumption.

I had concluded long ago that the main factor involved in "web sites" was the physical characteristics of the site itself. I had seen orb webs of the Garden Spider *Araneus diadematus* strung like flying buttresses all around the base of a circular garden conifer. I discovered over twenty webs, all in a line along the overhang at the top of a cricket score board belonging to *Zygiella x-notata*. These, and countless other sites could not possibly give any special advantage in the catching of flying insects. They were just convenient. I therefore wondered if the physical presence of the light fittings gave better conditions for stringing one's snare but I found webs close by, but unconnected to the light's housing. A careful check around the building confirmed that the webs were only on or near the lights, leaving yards of apparently quite suitable sites quite bare of webs. My original assumption was looking good! Or was it?

I then considered other theories that did not involve spider intelligence. Could it be that spiders, like many insects, are also attracted to lights? This phenomenon is in itself intriguing. Or could I be observing a process of evolution? The spiders who build by lights would become more successful by way of better feeding.

This would possibly increase their size, metabolism and fertility. Their offspring would therefore be better equipped for survival and would carry the tendency to build webs near lights.

I fear the question remains unanswered and that my original assumption was flawed. The only conclusion I can reach is that I was correct in questioning my assumption in the first place!

I do not believe that a spider figures out in its mind that it will fare better if it builds its web near a light. I favour the theory that lights attract many creatures and therefore where they are present they will draw those creatures towards them.

I would be interested in the views of others on this subject as I can be sure there is some point I have missed or some theory I have failed to consider.

Garth M. Coupland

Please send items for November Natterjack before 1st October to Colin Dack 12, Shipdham Road, Toftwood, Dereham, Norfolk. NR19 1JJ.



Larinioides scolopetarius
Cantley - May 1998

BOTANICAL MYSTERY IN WELLS!

In the 1970's, I photographed Pale Flax, *Linum bienne*, and Meadow Saxifrage, *Saxifraga granulata*, on the main sea wall in Wells. The former is quite rare in Norfolk, and the latter found in scattered localities, this being its only site in the Wells area. In 1978, after the February tidal surge and flood, the sea wall was completely rebuilt, using mainly local material from the harbour, with some imported topsoil. I suspect the latter included seeds of Viper's Bugloss, *Echium vulgare* and Weld, *Reseda luteola*, both of which appeared the following year, and have persisted ever since.

However, in the early 90's, the Pale Flax re-appeared, and now grows along both sides of the Beach Road, where its range has extended, the seed being perhaps carried along by car-produced eddies. This year, 1998, two separate colonies of Meadow Saxifrage are there as well – as far as I can recall, very near to where they used to grow 21 years ago! O.K., I agree that someone might have scattered seed, but who? – and why? And why just those two species, which had a foothold there in pre-flood days? My feeling is that they somehow survived, and have taken all this time to "work their way through". Any better ideas?

Paul Banham

A DEVICE TO ASSIST AN AILING MEMORY

As one gets older the memory tends to deteriorate and for some time I have been looking for some assistance. My interest is bryophytes which are not the easiest things to identify, being so small. I have always been interested in computers and so perhaps one of the small personal organisers would fill the bill. If one looks in the Argos catalogue there are so many different models that it is difficult to find out which would do the job.

What I wanted was a database with a record for each species of moss and liverwort. In Norfolk there are 260 mosses and 80 liverworts so I would need space for perhaps 500 records altogether to allow for those found elsewhere. For each record I needed 15 fields to enter information as follows: Species, Synonym, Type, Habitat, pH, County, Leaf, Nerve, Auricle, Cells, Stem, Capsule, Gemma, Colour and Notes. These were the fields for mosses; liverworts were slightly different.

The next thing to find out was the memory needed. Computer pundits in the society told me to multiply the number of records by the number of fields by the length of each field. The field size I did not know yet, so I estimated 100 characters. The calculation was therefore $500 \times 15 \times 100 = 750000$. This, theoretically, is the number of bytes of memory, or 3/4 of a megabyte.

In order to be able to retrieve information quickly, a search facility was required. It would be useful, for instance, to be able to search on the species first, but it would also be a help to be able to search on any field. If I found a moss with a hair point, to be able to display all the mosses with a hair point would be a help.

I started going round shops which sell these devices but could I find anyone who knew anything about them, not a hope. They are really sold to replace the great thick note books which high power executives carry around to remind them of appointments and to hold telephone numbers. Most of them have databases which are pre-programmed to contain: name, address, telephone, fax, etc., and these headings cannot be changed. Most do not have a search facility.

Then I went into Currys in Norwich and found a young lad to explain to me what they would all do and he took one out of a holster on his belt and explained that he had put every piece of kit in the shop on his and could recall the information on about four key taps. This organiser was called a Psion Series 1. He suggested that what would be best for me was a Psion Siena which was sold as a 512 kilobyte or a one megabyte; I therefore went for the latter.

One worry was batteries. It runs on two AAA batteries with a small watch battery as back-up. When you get low on power you are warned to fit new batteries. These last about 26 hours and you can check at any time how many hours have elapsed since the batteries were changed. The Siena switches off automatically after a pre-set time, which can be altered. When you switch on again, the computer is at the same point you left it; no loading up again as in a PC.

The second concern was back-up. With a PC you back-up your files onto floppy disks. Psion sell a cable to connect the Siena to your PC with software to make it work, which includes the database. This means that you can back-up onto the PC and even work on the databases on the PC and then copy them back to the Siena. It also gives you the facility of printing out the database or parts of it.

So far I have entered 365 mosses, 98 liverworts, 68 names and addresses with telephone numbers and 40 events in the diary and have only used about a third of the memory. It fits comfortably in a shirt pocket although I have bought a shoulder holster to keep it safe. It does exactly what I wanted.

John Mott

Wildlife Music. How about a Top Ten?

In the dim and distant past, the would be wildlife watcher went out into the field using his eyes and ears. A bird song or animal sound would be followed through the wood, or wherever, until the maker of the sound was discovered. The sound and appearance of the creature would be mentally filed, and, over a period of months and years, a personal memory bank of animals and birds would be built up until the person doing the study became part of the countryside in which they lived, its sights and sounds as much a part of life as eating and breathing.

Today, things have changed, with videos of the wildlife and CDs and tapes of all the sounds of the wild which make it possible for the observer to learn all these sights and sounds without even getting up from the fireside chair. With all these tapes and CDs perhaps it is time that we had a 'Top Ten' of wildlife music of all time. A combination of the music of our culture allied to the wildlife of the countryside? Here are a few suggestions.

"Nessun Dorma," (None shall sleep), from Turandot by Cy Fonaptera and the Bed Bugs.

"Little Boxes," by The Tit Family Singers.

"Bury Me Out on the Prairie," by Necro 4 Us and the Investigators.

"The Green Green Grass of Home," by Medd O'Brown and the Crambids.

"Something Tells Me I'm in to Somethin' Good," by Geo Troopies and the Dung Beetles.

"The Last Rose of Summer," by Avis Rosier.

"I dreamt that I dwelt in Marble Galls," by Andricus Kollari.

"The Humming Chorus," from Nabucco by Moss Keyteau and the Drones.

"They Cut Down the Old Pine Tree," by Cyrus Gigas and the Horntails.

"Speed the Plough," by the Vespas,

Alec Bull

DAMSELFLIES IN THE POND

I first noticed Large Red Damselflies emerging from our garden pond on 1st May. The pond in question is only one year old so I was rather surprised as the amount of detritus on the bottom must be very small and I would not have expected it to be suitable for them so early. But there they were, climbing up the iris stems as rather ugly little beasts and an hour later they had transformed into beautiful damselflies. One which I watched from the point of it starting to emerge, took just forty minutes until it flew. The wings when first meeting the light of day are very small but quickly reach their full size. The insect is very pale on first emerging, but as the wings gain length and strength so the rich colour is gained. Later in the day a pair were already egg laying on the surface plants. The wheel of life turned full circle yet again.

Tony Howes. June 1998

WOODPECKERS IN THE GARDEN

Recently we have had the pleasure of a Greater Spotted Woodpecker visiting the bird table in the garden. The blood red nape marks it as a male.

This is the first year that we have continued feeding through the spring and shredded suet has been the attraction for this particular visitor. It nearly always announces its arrival by a sharp, single call. Any other birds that are already on the table are bullied off by a threat display with wings spread. Even the wood pigeons give way to this aggression. He puts his head down sideways and using his beak almost like a shovel scoops as much suet as he can into his bill and then off he goes again.

I have followed the flight path back to the wood nearby and by this means found the nest which is in a dead silver birch tree, fifteen feet or so above the ground. The young could be heard chattering away inside. The distance in a straight line from nest to bird table would be about 400 yards.

I have, over the last week, managed to entice him down onto an old log drilled with a few holes to hold the suet. This was on the lawn in good light with a suitable background of conifers. With my hide erected 8 feet or so away, I managed to get what I hope will be some fine photographs of this colourful and welcome visitor.

Tony Howes. June 1998

LAPWING BREEDING NEAR NORWICH

While checking on great crested grebes on the river Yare at Whitlingham Lane near Norwich I came across some lapwing that were breeding on the marshes. Most of these marsh fields are now gravel workings and are already filling up with water but the one area left was being used by an estimated ten pairs of birds. In most cases the young were already wandering about on their own but with attentive parents close by. Any crows passing over the marsh would instantly be subjected to a 'sorting out' by several adults. I also saw a kestrel receive the same treatment.

The young from each nest could be seen from the car quite clearly. They kept roughly together but at times wandered some distance from each other. Through the binoculars they were small bundles of mottled fluff in shades of brown, cream and black. They had the same feeding manner as the parents - run a few steps, then stop, pick up an item of food, then run another few steps. Most pairs of adults seemed to have a full count of four chicks, so they were doing very well. Lapwings generally, like many of our birds these last few years, seem to be diminishing in number as a breeding species so it was pleasing to witness their success on this marsh.

In passing, it was interesting to note that at least eight little ringed plovers were displaying and flying around the newest of the gravel pits. The fact that heavy machinery is still being used, did not seem to alarm them at all. As there are plenty of shingle and sandy areas around the margins it's almost certainly going to be home for some more new babies in the near future.

Tony Howes. June 1998

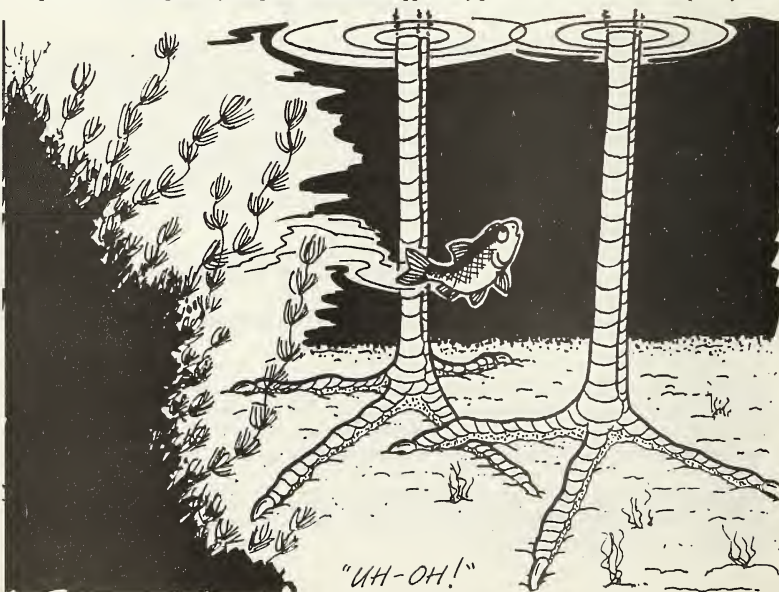
CRIME PREVENTION ADVICE!

As everyone knows, Herons will rob you of the fish that you carefully nurture in the garden pond.

My pond, however, has never lost a fish although others around me regularly have early morning raids by Herons. I believe that garden centres will sell you a plastic Heron to place by the pond as the birds apparently prefer to feed alone. Consequently I also believe that if you build your pond close to a large window, as I did, the Heron will see its own reflection as it lands and be on his way without further ado!

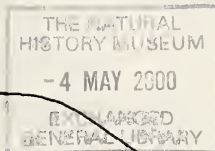
Possibly a large mirror, placed at dusk and removed the next morning would be a preferable alternative to unsightly netting for those whose ponds are away from large windows?

Garth M. Coupland





Number 63



November 1998

THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK

The quarterly bulletin of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

Programme 1999

Sunday 17 January

Meet at Strumpshaw RSPB Reserve at 1030 hrs to consolidate into fewer cars. OS Grid Ref: TG 341 066.

First we go to the Cantley Sugar Factory to hear a short explanation about the ecology of the site, followed by a walk round the settling lagoons. The sugar factory uses water to wash the beet off lorries and then to transport it into the factory. This water then flows into settling lagoons before flowing back into the river.

Second we travel to Buckenham Marshes where car parking is limited.

We return to Strumpshaw for a packed lunch and toilets. In the afternoon Mike Poulton will take anyone interested round the reserve.

Sunday 18 April

Ashwellthorpe Lower Wood is an NWT Reserve. It is ancient semi-natural woodland on boulder clay. Trees include alder, ash, oak, hazel, hornbeam, field maple, holly, elm, hawthorn and blackthorn. Shrubs include dogwood, guelder rose and spindle.

Parking is in the Warden's meadow, just past a wood yard in the middle of the village. Do not try to use the old entrance. OS Grid Ref: TM 142 977.

This is the third visit to this reserve, looking at it through the seasons.

John Mott

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

GILES DUNMORE, County Bird Recorder for the Society has recently moved to:

49 Nelson Road, Sheringham, Norfolk, NR26 8DA (Tel: 01263 822550)

Contributors to the BIRD REPORT are asked to send all records to him at the above address, preferably on a monthly basis so that work on the preparation of the classified list can be spread throughout the year.

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The Society's Council could find itself homeless early next year. For many years meetings have been held in the Norwich Castle Museum, the Society's "spiritual home", but that arrangement must come to an end with the start of the major refurbishment work that will in time give us a much improved museum but in the meantime will cause a great deal of disruption.

Several possibilities for a new venue are being explored by members of Council but if any other members of the Society have any suggestions or contacts that might help us find a suitable new home we would be glad to hear from you.

We need a room, preferably in the Norwich area, that will comfortably seat 30-35 Council members at five or six meetings a year. Needless to say, we are looking for somewhere that will not cost a fortune to hire. We do not need kitchen facilities - just chairs and tables.

David Paull, Chairman

MYSTERY SOLVED

A little learning is rapidly exposed. I bought a *Pieris* from a local supermarket and set about transferring it to a large terracotta pot. As I removed the plant from its plastic pot, I noticed among the roots what I was convinced were insect eggs. The plant was invested with them. Not wanting to breed something nasty in clean, new compost, I carefully teased out the roots and removed the offending eggs. I destroyed all but a few that I kept for identification. It was a bold Robert Maidstone who came up with the answer. He popped one and tasted it. It was a slow-release fertilizer capsule!

David Paull

MARSTON MARSH, EATON, NORWICH, JUNE 3rd 1998

Without the slightest hint from the weather forecasters of what was in store for us, I led a small group of members out across my local "patch". Barely half an hour later, we abandoned Marston Marsh and fled as fast as our wellies would carry us. With lightning and thunder directly and alarmingly overhead, the heavens opened and we were bombarded with quarter-inch hailstones. When we escaped to the footpath and the road, we found drifts of hail an inch or more deep. And this was June 3rd!

Fortunately we had just long enough to see several of the "goodies" the marsh has to offer and to note how the state of the marsh flora was markedly different from the same time last year. The marsh, designated as a local nature reserve by Norwich City Council and forming part of the city boundary where it lies along side the River Yare, had been flooded during the winter, a common and welcome occurrence, but then there were the Easter floods and much of the marsh was again under a foot or more of water after the Yare topped its banks.

Probably as a result of this dousing very late in the season, the effect on the orchids was significant. Whereas a year earlier there had been relatively few Early Marsh Orchids *Dactylorhiza incarnata* but mostly full-sized, vigorous spikes, this year there were many more spikes but almost all of them were severely stunted. Similarly, although we were a little early for Southern Marsh Orchid *D. praetermissa*, those we found were also no more than a few inches high and seemingly unlikely to get much bigger. Last year, when I tried to photograph the orchids, I had to fight my way through dense swathes of Yellow Rattle *Rhinanthus minor*. This year it was a case of looking for them. Ragged Robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi* was also rather less evident. By contrast, Common Meadow-rue *Thalictrum flavum* and Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria* seemed to be revelling in the wetter conditions and were rampant. Hardly surprising, the birds, butterflies and dragonflies had more sense than the naturalists and kept their heads down. But on a "recce" the previous afternoon - in hot sunshine! - I had noted some of the marsh's familiar clutch of warblers (Blackcap, Garden Warbler, Whitethroat, Chiffchaff and Willow Warbler, but as yet no Sedge or Reed Warblers), six species of butterflies (Holly Blue, Common Blue, Speckled Wood, Red Admiral, Green-veined White and Small White), and Azure Damselflies *Coenagrion puella*. This may well have been the Society's shortest field trip on record, apart from those that have been rained off before they started. We must try again some time.

David Paull

GALL ON WELSH POPPY

It is not surprising that we have reared the gall wasps *Aylax papaveris* from the capsules of the garden Shirley Poppies. An examination of the capsules of the Welsh Poppy *Meconopsis cambrica* also revealed a swelling inside containing white grubs. They seemed to have affected the septa of the capsules and are, possibly, the work of *Aylax papaveris*.

The emergence of any gall wasps is not expected until next year. It was also noted that capsules collected and ripening after 3rd August had no galls, possibly the season was over for their production.

Reg Evans

KNOPPER GALL - CAUSERS, INQUILINES AND PARASITES

A collection of 39 fallen knopper galls was made in Hockering wood on the 18th. May, 1997. Emergence of the gall causer was not expected until the following year, however, during May and June of that year smaller blackish wasps emerged. These were the inquilines ('lodgers') which emerged through small holes scattered on the surface of the galls. They numbered 224 and belonged to the genus *Synergus* of which *S. umbraculus* is a species which we have reared from marble galls *Andricus kollari*.

On 12th. February, 1998, 24 gall causers *Andricus quercuscalicis* were noted. Dissection of the galls revealed that some had failed to emerge and were found dead inside the galls, perhaps conditions were too dry. A parasitic chalcid wasp, *Mesopolobus jucundus* (Pteromalidae) was present, a species which we have also recorded from oak pea galls *Cynips divisa*. The inquiline, *Synergus*, has yet to be determined.

Lilian Evans

MODERN MATERIAL MIMICRY MYSTIFIES MAYFLIES

When I received a 'phone call from David Fagg from Strumpshaw he told me that hundreds of flies appeared to be egg laying on his wet flat roof, "What were they?" The proverbial question came to mind, 'How long is a piece of string?' I suspected mayflies but told him to send some and I would name them for him.

They duly arrived and I was able to say they were mayflies of a specie *Cloeon dipterum* L. Some years ago at Ludham I had seen a number of mayfly bodies at the side of a large puddle on the side of the road where I presumed they had been blown by passing vehicles. I thought no more about the incident until I attended the Scout camp at Decoy Broad last year to visit the younger generation of my tribe. When I parked my car I noticed that many of the scout's cars that had been there all night were covered with small mayflies called *Caenis luctuosa* Burm. It had rained previously but the sun had dried out most of the vehicles by the time I arrived. On visiting the green mess marquee for a welcoming cup of smoky tea I noticed that the entire outside roof was also covered with thousands of their dried up bodies.

David Fagg has recently sent me a few pages from this summer's issues of "The New Scientist" in which the answer to this phenomenon has been solved in Hungary.

The family name for mayflies is Ephemeroptera which means "One day on the wing". Having spent an aquatic nymphal life in the water from a few months up to two years according to the specie, the final aquatic moult is fully winged and as such they leave the water and are capable of a short flight, in this stage their wings are dull and opaque and fishermen call them "Duns". After a short rest they moult again into the beautiful and graceful fully sexed insects that fishermen call "Spinners". The males gather in large swarms, rising and falling in their mating display, to attract the females. Mating takes place on the wing and the females have to find water and deposit their eggs before ending their short but hectic adult existence.

It is known that insects with aquatic larvae are attracted to water by the light reflected off the surface that is strongly polarised in the horizontal plane. The Hungarian scientists noticed that mayflies were laying eggs on the surface of wet asphalt roads, they also proved that the light reflected from such roads was also horizontally polarised. By experimenting with various coloured plastic sheets they found that black shiny plastic attracted the most insects, they also proved that smooth asphalt roads produced polarised light almost as good as the smooth black plastic and as the road area was far greater than that of the nearby stream it was more attractive to the insects.

Over the years when my car has been parked near an expanse of water in summer I have had the occasional water insect such as Corixid or Notonecta land with a plop on the bonnet or roof. Alan Stubbs, an entomologist, however writes that from 1972 in the Thames valley new cars stored near water prior to sale sustained paintwork damage in June when swarms of mayflies were attracted by polarised light reflections, then they were virtually fried alive on the hot metal surfaces, their body fluids often etched right through the paint film and left recognisable imprints of the insects.

Another writer from Little Dale in Yorkshire stated that after rain showers wagtails were to be found on the smooth asphalt road eating the many insects attracted there, but never on rough or coloured road surfaces. They had noticed that the flattened bodies of hedgehogs were more often found in such areas having been enticed by the increase in insect food and this had led to their demise.

It maybe that with the increase of smooth asphalt roads we may find a decrease in vulnerable mayfly species in certain areas if they continue to lay their eggs on roofs and roads.

Ken Durrant

A WOODLAND WALK IN MAY

Some years ago I found a dead chicken one morning which had 14 large burying beetles beneath it. They were all black except for the reddish antennal clubs. to my surprise they had all left the carcase by midday. Since then we have examined carrion for the presence of this and other red-banded species.

On this walk, Gordon Meek found a white wing lying in the wood, and no sign of the carcase (fox?). On moving the feathers, there were no less than five mating pairs of the Red-breasted Carrion Beetle *Oiceoptoma thoracicum*.

Since we are always looking beneath logs for fungi as well as carrion, it seems to us to be uncommon. We have only two previous records in Norfolk. Perhaps we have been unlucky.

Fungi were scarce but Christine Meek pointed out a little buff cup fungus about 2" x 2" and the red discs of a fungus *Scutellinia scutellata* which has black hairs around the edges of the disc and is sometimes called the 'eyelash fungus'.

A green shield bug *Palomena prasina* was seen, perhaps just emerged from hibernation - in which state it becomes brownish, regaining its colour on becoming active. It readily took to flight.

Reg & Lil Evans

A PIRATE SPIDER (ERO)

This small spider has a rounded abdomen bearing one or two pairs of humps. The legs are banded and with a lens the Genus can be identified (Ero).

Examination of an old birds' nest revealed a variety of small spiders, fly larvae and other invertebrates. A surprising find was a female pirate spider. This was caught and offered a swatted 'bluebottle'. According to the literature this should be unacceptable as other spiders are said to be its only prey. Our pirate spider moved closer to this freshly killed fly and was presumed to be resting upon it. By the evening it had moved to the other end and (with a lens) could be seen feeding. Two days later the spider accepted another dead 'bluebottle'.

It was thought that the pirate spider possibly after eating the owner of a web, becomes a scavenger for any remnants left by the victim.

The introduction of a few fruit flies (*Drosophila*) into the container had unexpected results. One fruit fly moving close to the spider was promptly seized and eaten. The attack was rapid and reminiscent of a crab spider.

Clearly this spider will eat both dead or live flies. It has put on weight during the last fortnight. The observation continues.

Reg Evans

THE BIG GREEN JOBS

I made a mental note based on an article in "Natterjack" last year by Garth Coupland, to get out to the village of Reedham this SUMMER (that's a laugh to start with) and try and photograph the Great Green Bush Cricket *Tettigonia viridissima*.

I had not seen this lovely, huge insect since I was a child and lived in Wymondham. According to Garth they were still found in Reedham village centre, enjoying hedges, rough areas etc., and were in fair numbers. I walked down lanes, up roads, through fields, over gates, under trees etc., for a long time listening for the 'song'. I had begun to have thoughts of this cricket being a mythical creature here in Reedham. I waded through grass and nettle patches, stepped over brambles, climbed over and through various tree limbs shed by the wind - nothing. I did come across fair numbers of what I took to be Dark Bush Crickets *Pholidoptera griseoaptera* but these were not the quarry, they were but small fry to what I was hoping to find.

I had all but given up on the quest and was making my way back when suddenly I heard it, the loud continuous 'sewing machine-like' sound. My heart missed a beat, could this really be what I had come to see? I approached with great care as Garth had advised and when I got close to the sound I stared into the hawthorn hedge trying to spot the singer. Stand very still he had said, so I looked hard at the spot hoping to see a movement. It was uncanny, just like one of those 'Magic Eye' pictures from the magazines. My eyes were flicking all over a square foot of hedge and then suddenly, there it was right in front of me, this huge bright green 'grasshopper-like beast', in full view sitting on a hawthorn branch. What a moment, with shaking hands I set the camera up - as I was getting a few photographs I heard another 'singer' just along the hedge. In all I found four along about fifty yards of hedgerow, all 'singing' males. Garth had said in his article that he had only ever found two females. I can understand this, because they don't 'sing' they would be impossible to find, so well do they merge with their surroundings.

Then with honour restored and a few photographs in the camera I wended my way back to the car. A happy man, privileged to see such a beautiful insect. It was also rather nostalgic because the last one I had seen was about fifty-five years ago - then, as now I marvelled at its size and colour.

Tony Howes

ANTICS IN THE POND

When conditions are suitable I like to take a cup of tea outside and sit by the pond for a while, it's a chance to 'catch up' with what's happening in that part of the garden. Yesterday (the last day of August) was one of the few this summer when conditions were reasonable enough to indulge in this activity.

As I watched the goldfish swimming around, an adult frog popped its head up out of the surface weed. There were many wasps flying in and out of the pond for a drink. They don't normally stay for many seconds and I watched one land on the weed close to the frog, which instantly lunged forward and grabbed the wasp, the eyes blinked and that was that. I saw the same thing happen several minutes later. This rather surprised me as I would have expected the frog to have been stung, if it was it didn't seem to have any effect on it. Later still I watched a wasp climbing up an iris stem in the water, the frog came from probably 18 inches away towards the movement and actually leapt from the water to attempt to catch it - we live and learn.

Tony Howes

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Following the untimely death of Colin Dack (see next page) a vacancy has arisen for the post of Membership Secretary. Any member of the Society interested in taking up this post please contact the Secretary of the Society, Dr. A. R. Leech at the following address: 3 Eccles Road, Holt, Norfolk, NR25 6HJ before January 1st 1999.

NATTERJACK EDITOR

Colin Dack was also the editor of the quarterly "Natterjack", a position he had held since February 1987 (Issue 16). This edition, therefore is understandably late, although the majority of it was put together by Colin before he became ill. As the new editor I have had to hold over an article or two until the February issue for obvious reasons. If any member wishes to share their thoughts or personal reflections regarding Colin I look forward to receiving them along with your natural history news and views in 1999.

Francis Farrow.

OBITUARY

COLIN DACK
(1940 - 1998)

It is with great sadness that we hear of the death of Colin Dack, on November 14th in Addenbrooks Hospital, Cambridge, following a cerebral haemorrhage.

Colin has been a valued member of Council and an enthusiastic worker behind the scenes for the Society for many years in the capacity of Membership Secretary and was one of the first members to advocate using computers for the Society's work.

After leaving school he was apprenticed at engineering, later being 'called up' in the R.A.F., where he saw service in Aden and the Far East as an armourer together with another of our late members, Philip Cambridge. Following his discharge, Colin returned home to Dereham to continue both his occupation as an engineer and his hobbies, being in the main, photography, natural history and geology. He was a regular attendant of our meetings, both indoor and field, and latterly had taken a specific interest in birds.

Following the death of his parents, Colin greatly appreciated his friends in the Society as his family. He undertook the production of the "Natterjack" diligently (this being his last - retrieved from the computer) and together with other duties often worked late into the night to get copy ready for the printers, and with a little help (usually demanded in his own inimitable way) prepared the Society's publications for dispatch.

The writer has known Colin since his school days and (like many other Society members) will miss those late night chats on the 'phone.

Ken Durrant

COLIN DACK - A personal tribute.

A complex man - there were times when he could exasperate one beyond measure; his interruptions at a Society meeting, his numerous telephone calls - usually at meal times, however, beneath that gruff exterior Colin had a heart of gold. His concern for people, his genuine interest in our families, coupled with his fund of general knowledge on many topics, freely given to young and old alike, will be remembered by many.

A lonely man, the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society became Colin's 'family' and from its members he had a circle of friends.

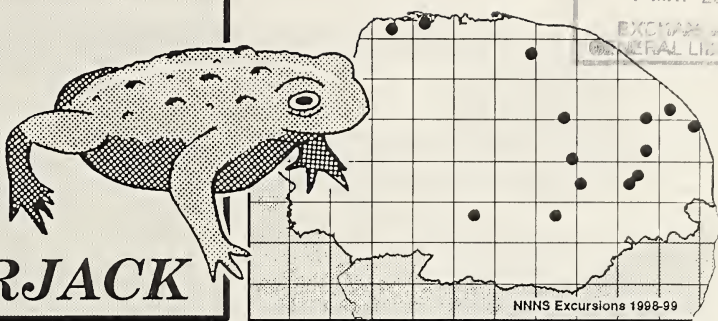
We shall miss him at indoor meetings and on field excursions, complete with telescope and tripod and on his shoulder his large camera bag containing an assortment of cameras and a selection of lenses.

May he rest in peace.

Mary Dorling

Please send items for February Natterjack before 1st January 1999 to:
Francis Farrow, "Heathlands", 6 Havelock Road, Sheringham, Norfolk, NR26 8QD.

THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK



Toad-in-the-hole.....

Welcome to the first bulletin of the new year. It comes to you with a *new* editor and a *new* look! This issue of 'The Norfolk Natterjack' sports a bold *new* front page, featuring a *new* 'toad' by Tony Leech combined with a Norfolk DMAP of current excursion locations and an all *new* magazine-style format.

Presentation is very important and the Society, as you know, will be in the forefront of publishing over the next year or two with the numerous 'Wildlife 2000' articles presently being written up. These papers will be of great value in the future.

Such is the significance of the 'Wildlife 2000' project that the Society's lead should command a high profile and the new look of the 'Natterjack' aims in part to promote this. In this issue you will note that members are being extremely observant and not only are they finding additional Norfolk records but new national ones too.

Now, as many of you will be venturing into the field as spring approaches, please send in your own observations and news items to the 'Natterjack' then I won't have to fill *in-the-hole!*

'FF'

Colin's legacy

A meeting has been arranged for October 19th as a memorial to Colin Dack (former Membership Secretary and 'Natterjack' editor). Colin enjoyed photography and has left his collection of almost 10,000 slides to the Society. He never showed his slides so after extensive sorting members will have an exclusive chance to view his work. As Colin was dyslexic the NNNs Council agreed that at this special evening a collection could be made with donations going to a local dyslexia group in Colin's memory. Further details will be given when finalised by the Programme committee.

Field Meeting Reminders

Sunday 28th February Leader: Charles Neale
Morning walk at Burnham Norton for birds.
Meet 1030 hrs. in the car park at TF 828442

Sunday 18th April Leader: Barry Watkins (Warden)
Ashwellthorpe Lower Wood through the seasons : Spring.
All-day meeting from 1100 hrs. Park at the Old Post Office, TM 142977



N.B. Photographic Group members' evening: **Tuesday 22nd March**
and Photographic Group lecture '*This beautiful world of ours*'
Tuesday 20th April at 1930 hrs. in the Assembly House, Norwich.
(Pierce and Kent Rooms respectively)

Don't forget...

Annual
General Meeting
Tuesday 16th March, 1999
1930hrs
Kent Room, Assembly House,
Norwich

The AGM will be followed by
'The Upper Bure Valley'
an illustrated talk by
Anne Brewster

The quarterly bulletin
of the
Norfolk & Norwich
Naturalists' Society



Founded 1869
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Number 64
February 1999

THE WINGED BUCCANEER

I have a sneaking admiration for all raptors. They have always been to me the gallant swash-buckling, "Look out, here I come" members of our avian friends.

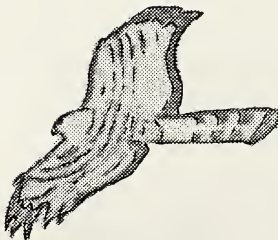
Here in Norfolk we are not over endowed with their ranks, therefore I was pleased when Sparrow-hawks began making a come back after the disastrous period of the 1950's. We began to see the odd one or two over my home village of Thorpe St. Andrew. Then about ten years ago I first noticed a display flight over our woodlands, (mainly thirty year old conifers), ideal nesting for this species. Each year since they have shown up during March and April, circling on the thermals, tails fanned and often going into long, steep glides with wings partly closed. At times you can hear the high pitched, mewing calls as they spiral way up above the trees. If I am working in the garden at this time of year I like to get the binoculars and scan the sky, I have found that warm sunny days, often with fleecy white clouds being gently pushed by a breeze are to their liking. It always gives me a thrill to pick out that unmistakable silhouette as it banks way above. Sometimes they climb so high that they are mere specks, even in the binoculars. Marsh Harriers will do the same. I am sure they just love being up there. It's fun - it's being alive!

We begin to see, in May and June, Sparrow-hawks returning to the woods with prey in their talons, even quite late in the evening they will pass over. Last year my next door neighbour told me of a strange bird they had seen in their garden (they are not birdy people) eating a Starling. When I went to look, there was the unmistakable circle of plucked feathers, and one leg. Then a few weeks later they had

the same thing happen again, only this time it was a young Blackbird. Now at this point one has to put things into perspective, my neighbour is not alone, this is happening in many gardens in villages and towns throughout the land. It must amount to many hundreds, even thousands of small birds per annum being killed for Sparrow-hawk families. There are many people I am sure who throw up their hands in horror at this thought but this is life in the raw, it has been going on for a long, long time. Sparrow-hawks, along with other raptors have been killing and eating small birds since time began. My own view is that Mother Nature sorts things out for the best in the long run, we will not lose all our songbirds to Sparrow-hawks, if it happens, it will be the result of our (*Homo sapiens*) own greed and thoughtlessness. All other creatures on this earth can and do live together without too much hassle, only we as a species have the ability to throw the proverbial spanner in the works.

So I say enjoy the gallant buccaneer with his break-neck dashes through the gardens and lanes, he came back from the brink, and I for one was very pleased at his return.

Tony Howes



AT LARGE IN NORFOLK

What sort of a year (1998) was it for four veterans of the Society? To go into Norfolk on field days with such characters as Ken Durrant, Keith Clarke and Derek Howlett is never dull. Something interesting always seems to be discovered or happens. One learns that Ken loves to eat whitebait with brown bread and butter washed down with a glass of ale, Derek falls onto steak and kidney pie and chips and Keith is a compulsive treacle tart and custard addict. In fact before planning any visit we have first to ascertain whether the local inn serves treacle pudding and/or even spotted dick and custard.

I have decided that I should have studied entomology. Ken never bends down. He uses his sweep net at waist height and I have learnt that anything living low down in the vegetation can be classified as being "common" and of no value!!! With molluscs one has to get down onto one's knees.

We soon learnt that by cutting a hole in Derek's rubber boots that he would be forced to wear waders. This has allowed us all to stay warm and dry as he uses his net in waters deeper than we are able to enter. I recommend this strategy to colleagues.

Being an algal expert also has its moments. One just needs a bottle to collect a sample of water quickly in the field before scurrying off to the warmth of the car prior to using the heated laboratory to identify the diatoms. Keith has worked out this effective method for study on winters days when the north wind cuts across Norfolk.

In April we returned to the River Nar to complete a survey started in the previous summer. For members who do not know this beautiful part of Norfolk we recommend that you park car near the Castle and walk down to the river. The site is alive with natural history interests. As you walk down you should see a pattern of ditches across the meadows. These are the remains of a once extensive floating water-meadows system constructed in 1810 for Thomas Purdey of Castle Acre. The work entailed building channels, sluices, carriers and drain-like tunnels to irrigate the meadows. The idea was to flood the meadows early in the spring and so encourage the grass to grow and then by repeating the process in the mid-summer to gain additional grazing feed. Sadly in Norfolk the cold climate caused the system to be less successful than in the West Country.

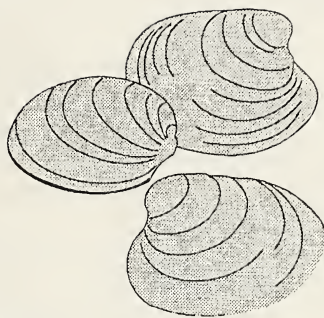
Diatoms require good eyesight, a knowledge of German and a strange self-fixation which grows with age!!! To get excited over the discovery at East Lexham of *Ellerbeckia arenaria* and at Castle Acre of *Aulacoseira coenulata* is my equivalent of supporting Norwich City football club.

In May we spent a few days at Seamer. Keith got very excited at the chance to obtain a core from the mere bottom to see the diatom succession and gain some insights into the history of the lake. With a group of students from the University he set out in two boats to take the core. From the bank one could see these "experts" in their two craft trying to steady the boats and hold them in position to get the muds up from the bottom. The imagery is embedded in the mind. And they called it scientific work!!

The River Stiffkey provided us with a number of pleasant days in the field. On 25th August 1998 we saw swarms of mayflies *Leptophlebia vespertina* (L.) rising from the river. Ken led us through the life stages and we were able to follow the mayflies making for some nearby hawthorn trees to settle. This noon swarming provided us with much to talk over as we descended upon plates of whitebait for lunch.

A survey for the rare snail *Vertigo angustior* led us along the Tas river valley. Flordon Common is the classic site for Norfolk, although in the late 1980's the beast was discovered on the edge of the Waveney Forest at Fritton. We have since found a new site at Saxlingham Thorpe. This snail is so small that one has to use creative imagination to see it in the field. It is known from only a few sites elsewhere in the U.K. so Norfolk has three for this extremely rare species.

In October we were returning from a trawling of mussels in the River Chet via the inn at Reedham Ferry when Derek begs us to let him have a dip into the waters with his hand net. At first we refused since it was getting dark and we all wanted to go home. In the end he prevailed. His first dip brought up a funny cockle-like bivalve. None of us had seen it before in Norfolk but Derek remembered from his extensive shell collection that it belonged to some species beginning with the letter "C". It turned out to be the asiatic clam *Corbicula fluminea* (Müller). This has been invading Europe from South China and the Philippines since the early 1980's. It is the first U.K. record for the



species. How it arrived in the River Chet from the Far East is anyone's guess. By boat? By koi carp importation? Who knows?

We have been monitoring and recording the molluscs, algae and diatoms of the meres, lakes and rivers of the Battle Area since early November for the army. On a freezing, wet cold day in late December we returned after treacle pudding and custard at the White Horse to look at West Mere, Tottingham. After years of drought the mere is now refilling from the underground waters. It is about 0.8m deep and already a pond weed, *Potamogeton gramineus*, is emerging. There are few mollusc species but it would be valuable to follow the changes and succession in the populations as the mere fills up and the aquatic vegetation changes. Sadly at our ages this will have to be left for others to study.

One strange creature that was present is a dark green ostracod with two spines protruding from its carapace. This turned out to be *Cypris bispinosa* the largest of the British ostracods. It is currently only known from two sites in the U.K., one in the Channel Islands and one in Cornwall. We now have a Norfolk record and the third for the U.K.

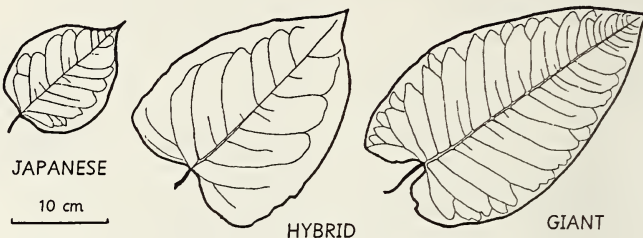
Roy Baker

HYBRID JAPANESE KNOTWEED

Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*, formerly known as *Polygonum cuspidatum*) is one of those all-too-numerous horticultural introductions which has escaped the confines of the garden. Although reasonably well-behaved in East Anglia, it has caused problems along river banks in Wales and in the south-east. Fortunately, the even larger Giant Knotweed (*Fallopia sachalinensis*) escapes more rarely and does not appear to cause any ecological problems. In Britain, all Japanese Knotweed plants are male-sterile and fail to produce pollen; some Giant Knotweed plants, however, do produce pollen and can fertilise the Japanese Knotweed. From seeds set in this way grows the Hybrid Knotweed (*Fallopia x bohemica*) which has also been cultivated.

My interest in these plants arose from meeting Catherine Pashley, a research student at the University of Leicester, who is studying the cytogenetics of the hybrid.

Figure 1: Knotweed leaves.



Within a couple of days of my hearing about this, friends John and Sue Thomson mentioned that in their garden at the Old Rectory, Hempstead, near Holt, they had two kinds of Japanese Knotweed. Armed with my newly acquired knowledge, I was delighted to find not only the two parent species but, some thirty yards away, a stand of the hybrid. This was subsequently confirmed by Catherine and her supervisor, Dr. John Bailey, when they visited the gardens.

Although known from over 100 sites around Britain, this is the first time that the hybrid has been recorded from East Anglia.

Furthermore, subject to their confirmation by DNA analysis, it appears to be only the second time that the hybrid has been found to have arisen naturally in Britain, the other being near Dolgellau.

The simplest way of identifying the hybrid is from the cuspidate base to the leaf (see figure 1, taken from the Knotweed Hybrid Survey Leaflet) and if anyone suspects that they have found a hybrid, or knows where the parents grow in proximity, I should be very pleased to pass the information on to Catherine.

Tony Leech

SOME STRUMPSHAW SIGHTINGS

As I sat in the marsh hide at Strumpshaw last January I watched a pair of Marsh Harriers displaying over the reedbeds. The day was sunny and very warm for the time of year with a gentle breeze. The birds were behaving as if it were April, calling and spiralling over the reeds, often at great heights. They would sometimes come together, one turning briefly on its back to reach out with its talons as they passed each other.

It was in this same hide during the summer of 1998 that I had watched up to four Hobbies at a time hunting dragonflies over the open water. The elegance of these falcons in flight is breathtaking, they powered just over the water taking the dragonflies with

ease. In the binoculars they could be seen eating them on the wing, holding the prey in their talons, lovely birds indeed.

Among the Grey-lag Geese that have been using the marshes of the Yare Valley for a few years there is now a bird that from a distance looks all white. I have often stalked this particular specimen trying to get close enough for a photograph, but so far in vain. I have been near enough recently to see that there is a lovely soft grey highlighting the white feathers, and the eye is dark not pink. The form and habit is certainly similar to the grey-lags, but whatever its parentage it is a very beautiful variant.

Tony Howes



If you have any line drawings of natural history subjects please send them to 'The Norfolk Natterjack'. They could be used to illustrate an article e.g. the Heron (p.5) by Society member Cherry Farrow or used as a vignette to fill a space.

Ed

HOME BIRDS

During 1998, I maintained a daily listing of bird species seen on, over or from my home at Frettenham (TG240171). I say daily, but in actual fact it was only possible to record on 343 out of the 365 days. The 'blanks' were as follows: January 2, 14, 15; May 16, 25; June 16, 27, 30; July 12, 18, 31; August 8, 9, 10, 24; September 6, 19, 20; October 8; November 27 and December 18, 24. There were no blank days in February, March and April. In general, daily observations were gathered over periods of between one and six hours; two hours having been the average (my workload not having permitted a more substantial input).

From my vantage point, particularly my first-floor dormer window, commanding a 180° viewpoint eastward of a north-

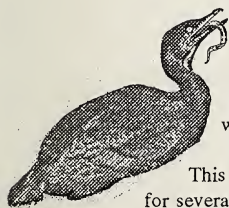
east to south-west axis to include gardens, a small fish-pond, rough pasture, overgrown hedges, (mostly) arable farmland, a worked out chalk pit, partly used for landfill, and the stone beck valley dividing Frettenham from Spixworth and Crostwick parishes, 75 species were recorded. Out of this total 23 species were observed in each month. Two more species, Wren and Carrion Crow, 'missed-out' only in August and February respectively.

The list opposite is in ranking order, viz.: rank, name and number of days - the suffix M meaning recorded in every month.

I consider that such a listing provides a useful 'snapshot' and I would like to do it all again - in a few years time!

Geoffrey Kelly

A LIVELY SNACK



Last January, as I watched from the tower hide at Strumpshaw Fen, a Cormorant surfaced from a dive with an 18 inch eel in its bill. As it tried to swallow it the eel kept winding itself round the birds neck.

This went on for several minutes, then a Heron that had been standing on the bank several yards away decided to join in the fun. It landed beside the Cormorant in deep water, swam alongside and took a stab at the eel, the Cormorant dived taking the fish with it. Twice more this happened, then the Heron flew off. Eventually the Cormorant subdued the eel enough to gulp it down, still squirming and very much alive. I wouldn't care for it myself!



Tony Howes

| | | |
|-----|--------------------------|------|
| 1 | Wood Pigeon | 343M |
| 2 | Starling | 342M |
| 3 | Blackbird | 338M |
| 4 | Collared Dove | 326M |
| 5 | Stock Dove | 325M |
| 6 | Blue Tit | 323M |
| 7 | Chaffinch | 320M |
| 8 | House Sparrow | 293M |
| 9= | Great Tit | 284M |
| | Maggie | 284M |
| 11 | Black-headed Gull | 263M |
| 12 | Duncock | 241M |
| 13 | Robin | 236M |
| 14 | Greenfinch | 233M |
| 15 | Mistle Thrush | 222M |
| 16 | Rook | 213M |
| 17 | Pied Wagtail | 186 |
| 18 | Jay | 159M |
| 19= | Kestrel | 144M |
| 19= | Common Gull | 144 |
| 21 | House Martin | 123 |
| 22 | Common Pheasant | 103 |
| 23 | Turtle Dove | 99 |
| 24= | Swift | 88 |
| 24= | Swallow | 88 |
| 26 | Lesser Black-backed Gull | 87 |
| 27 | Green Woodpecker | 86M |
| 28= | GL Spotted Woodpecker | 84M |
| 28= | Goldfinch | 84M |
| 30 | Song Thrush | 71M |
| 31 | GL Black-backed Gull | 69 |
| 32 | Carrion Crow | 68 |
| 33 | Lapwing | 66M |
| 34 | Skylark | 59 |
| 35 | Redwing | 51 |
| 36 | Wren | 45 |
| 37 | Coal Tit | 44 |
| 38 | Mallard | 40 |
| 39= | Jackdaw | 38 |
| 39= | Siskin | 38 |
| 41 | Long-tailed Tit | 32 |
| 42 | Yellowhammer | 31 |
| 43 | Linnet | 29 |
| 44 | Cormorant | 23 |
| 45 | Sparrow-hawk | 22 |
| 46 | Grey Heron | 21 |
| 47 | Fieldfare | 20 |
| 48= | Cuckoo | 14 |
| 48= | Blackcap | 14 |
| 50 | Herring Gull | 11 |
| 51= | Barn Owl | 10 |
| 51= | Goldcrest | 10 |
| 53 | Grey Lag Goose | 8 |
| 54 | Bullfinch | 7 |
| 55= | Mute Swan | 5 |
| 55= | Lesser Whitethroat | 5 |
| 57= | Whitethroat | 4 |
| 57= | Chiffchaff | 4 |
| 59 | Meadow Pipit | 3 |
| 60= | Canada Goose | 2 |
| 60= | Willow Warbler | 2 |
| 62= | Shelduck | 1 |
| 62= | Teal | 1 |
| 62= | Goshawk | 1 |
| 62= | Hobby | 1 |
| 62= | Red-legged Partridge | 1 |
| 62= | Little Ringed Plover | 1 |
| 62= | Golden Plover | 1 |
| 62= | Curlew | 1 |
| 62= | Redshank | 1 |
| 62= | Kingfisher | 1 |
| 62= | L. Spotted Woodpecker | 1 |
| 62= | Sand Martin | 1 |
| 62= | Spotted Flycatcher | 1 |
| 62= | Reed Bunting | 1 |

Nature on the net!

Some Natural History Websites

For those of you who are on-line and can "surf" the net the following information may be of interest...

The NNNS URL ('Uniform Resource Locator' - the website address) is currently getting up to 8 "hits" per day and can be found at:

<http://www.paston.co.uk/users/golds/nnnshome.html>

also there is a Norfolk Wildlife finding page at:

http://www.paston.co.uk/users/golds/norf_wlw.html

John Goldsmith

OPEN DAY

Wells Field Study Centre

Friday 9th April

2.30 - 8.00pm

The study centre at Polka Road, Wells-next-the-Sea is owned and run by the Education Department of Norfolk County Council. Society members are most welcome to attend.
Christine West

Congratulations to:

Don Dorling

on his appointment as chairman of the NORFOLK WILDLIFE TRUST.

Rex Hancy

on his election to the office of chairman of the BRITISH PLANT GALL SOCIETY.

Bob Ellis

on his appointment to succeed Alec Bull as the East Norfolk recorder for the BOTANICAL SOCIETY of the BRITISH ISLES.

What bird is that?

Society member Anne Brewster is running a short course

BIRDWATCHING
for BEGINNERS

at the
Corpusty Centre
on Sat. 13th March from 2-4 pm

All welcome

Small admission charge

What have we missed?

Could Field Excursion leaders please send a short account of their day out - its highlights, any downfalls etc - to the 'Natterjack', or maybe a 'volunteer' could be nominated to write up the event. I am sure the 'stay-at-homes' would like to know what happened where and what discoveries were made!



A note to CONTRIBUTORS...

Many thanks to all who have sent material to 'The Norfolk Natterjack'. Please keep it coming for the next issue in May. Due to the very unpredictable nature of my work it would be appreciated if any correspondence could be sent to the address opposite, as soon as possible, and marked with NNNS on the envelope. This will help locate material quickly when compiling the Bulletin which could well be at very short notice.

'FF'

NNNS

Francis Farrow
'Heathlands'
6 Havelock Road
Sheringham
Norfolk
NR26 8QD

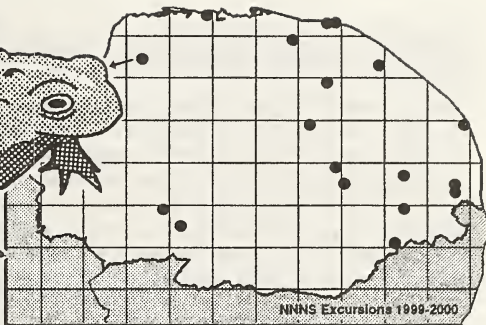
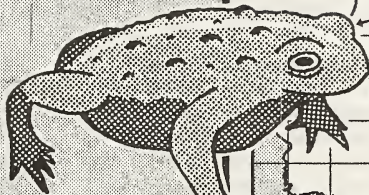


HISTORY MUSEUM

18 AUG 1999

EXCHANGE
GENERAL LIBRARY

THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK



From the Chairman...

We are on the move again - and for the first time the regular venue for our indoor meetings will be outside Norwich city centre. We hope you will understand the reasons for the change and will approve our choice.

When fire robbed us of both of our meeting places - the Central Library for our main Society meetings and the Assembly House where the photographic group had been meeting since it was formed - we camped out at a church hall off Ber Street, Norwich. It was not a pleasant experience and the numbers attending meetings dropped off alarmingly.

So when the Assembly house was restored and reopened, we gratefully moved in. Members returned in droves, and therein lies the problem. The Assembly House has rooms that hold a legal maximum of 50 or the far-too-large Music Room and Noverre Suite.

We have outgrown the smaller rooms and, combined with the fact that they are always grossly overheated, conditions have become impossibly uncomfortable. Many

members have complained, quite justifiably. There is also, depending on what else is on in the building, a shortage of parking space.

So, after I had "tested the water" at the February and March meetings and got an almost unanimous show of hands in favour, the Society's Council made the decision to move to the splendid new leisure and conference centre at Easton College.

There we shall have ample space in rooms that should be warm, not tropical, and there is plenty of parking.

The college is reached from the A47 Norwich Southern Bypass and is just a few minutes drive from either the Showground or Ringland roundabouts. A sketch map is enclosed with this issue of *Natterjack*. A larger-scale map with detailed advice on how to find the Easton College Leisure Centre and where to park will be provided with the next issue, shortly before the start of the indoor meetings season.

■ For many members, getting to meetings at Easton will be easier than negotiating through the city

centre traffic. But there will obviously be a problem for those without cars. So now is the time to do what we should have done some time ago: set up a simple register of members with cars who are willing to give other members lifts to indoor meetings and field trips. If you are willing to join such a register, will you please send me a note that need comprise only your name, telephone number and the approximate area from which you are prepared to pick up members, for example: "David Paull, 01603 457270, Eaton Village and Cringleford". I hope to be able to report in the next *Natterjack* that a good number of you volunteered and how members seeking lifts can make use of the service.

David Paull, Chairman

Toad-in-the-hole...

Just a small hole this quarter which means, of course, that you have sent in a good deal of material for "Natterjack" which is encouraging. In this bulletin we have giant slugs, rare fungi, more home birds, requests for information and important Society news. I am also pleased to report that many members have commented favourably on the new style. 'FF'

The quarterly bulletin
of the
Norfolk & Norwich
Naturalists' Society



Founded 1869
Registered Charity No. 291604

Number 65
May 1999

Past Issues of Transactions

Professor Hinde of St. John's College, Cambridge has delivered to me a number of back issues of the Society's Transactions. Many of these originally belonged to his uncle, Mr. F.C. Hinde, who was Honorary Treasurer of the Society from the mid-1930s to the mid-1940s, having served previously as our Honorary Librarian. Prof. Hinde wanted these books to find a good home and was happy for me to fill some gaps in my own run. The bulk of the copies are available for other members who are trying to complete their sets. A list of dates and Part numbers of the run follows and are now available on a first-come first-served basis on application to the undersigned at:

6 New Road, Hethersett, NORWICH, NR9 3HH

Telephone: 01603 810318

| Year | Volume - Part | | Year | Volume - Part |
|---------|---------------|--|---------|---------------|
| 1872-73 | (not shown) | | 1919-24 | XI 1 to 5 |
| 1888-89 | IV V | | 1924-29 | XII 1 to 5 |
| 1892-94 | V 4 & 5 | | 1929-34 | XIII 1 to 5 |
| 1894-99 | VI (bound) | | 1935-38 | XIV 1 to 5 |
| 1902-03 | VII 4 | | 1944-48 | XVI 1 to 5 |
| 1906-07 | VIII 3 | | 1949-53 | XVII 1 to 5 |
| 1913-14 | IX 5 | | | |
| 1914-19 | X 1 to 5 | | 1975 | 24 1 |

There are duplicates available for some of the years mentioned above.

In addition an anonymous donor left with the Wildlife Trust a further batch of more recent issues dating from 1980 to 1990 (including Bird & Mammal Reports) and these are also available if required.

Don Dorling

LOOK AFTER TOMORROW

Among the many birds that visit our garden are several Coal Tits. They seem to have a liking for Sunflower seeds, but they prefer to take them away from the feeders rather than eat them on the spot. I have watched on the occasion and seen many seeds taken one at a time to different parts of the garden, presumably to be eaten at leisure.

Last March, however, while tidying up the borders I had been surprised to find Sunflower seedlings popping up all over the place. In open soil, in among potted shrubs and in seed trays of small plants. It would appear this small feathery mite of a bird works on the same principle as its larger cousins and like Jays, Magpies and Crows it 'puts a bit away for a rainy day'.

Tony Howes

PLANTS ON ROOFS

I am preparing a paper on the vascular plants (i.e. excluding mosses and liverworts) that grow on roofs and in roof gutters, based mainly on several years' observations, often through binoculars, in West Norfolk. But I should be interested to hear from members in any part of the county who may have noticed plants growing in these unlikely situations, particularly if they have been seen in flower. Roofs and gutters are clearly unfavourable habitats for plants,

so I am making a note of these species which manage to reach the flowering stage perched aloft.

Thatched roofs in West Norfolk appear to be devoid of plants. Is this because they are too steeply pitched or perhaps the material is too hostile to plant growth? There is some evidence that wheat straw used in the West Country may be more favourable in this respect than the reed straw which is (or was) traditional in Norfolk. Have members any views on this?



Asbestos roofs appear to support a richer growth of plants than tiles, perhaps because of their alkalinity. Also, of course they usually have a flatter pitch.

Any observations to:

R. M. Payne
"Applegate"

Thieves Bridge Road
Whittington, PE33 0HL

HOME BIRDS II

Our garden, at Stanhoe near King's Lynn, unlike Geoffrey Kelly's (Natterjack no. 64 - February 1999) is completely enclosed with trees and shrubs and the only thing visible from the house apart from the garden and adjacent trees is some sky. We liken it to a clearing in a small wood through in fact once away from the garden, the area is largely arable.

We watch from a downstairs window, usually about a half an hour at breakfast time and shorter periods during the day. We have several ponds and well filled birdbaths so entice several birds to bathe, we also feed peanuts, sunflower seeds, small seeds such as niger (*Guizotia abyssinica*) and dripping in a log with holes.

The list opposite, in ranking order, is the total of daily sightings through 1998 made on 354 days, the others we were away. Birds seen over the garden rather than within are indicated with an *.

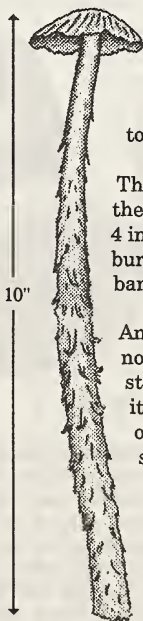
Having been watching intermittently from the same window for thirty or more years there have been many changes, for example, Great Spotted Woodpeckers have arrived only within the last 10 years, but then we would have had nesting House Sparrows, Swallows, Swifts and Starlings and regular Marsh Tits. A check through some old lists would make an article in itself.

Gillian Beckett

A Fungus Find

On March 29th this year I found three hard and dry fruiting body stems of a fungus that I had never seen before. They were in light, sandy soil on a bank overshadowed by a hedge, on the side of the road at Drayton (A1067), near the old David Rice Hospital.

After consulting the books it came down to *Battarea phalloides* (later confirmed by Mike Woolner). It appears to be a very unusual and rare fungus in the UK. The interesting feature is the long, thin stem. It is very rough and woody and



closely resembles a small pine tree topped by a tiny cap.

The average length of the stem was 10 inches, 4 inches of which was buried in the soil of the bank.

An article in Natterjack no. 60 (February 1998) states that at that time it had been recorded only on 42 occasions, so I was pleased that my walk along the Drayton Road had resulted in such an interesting find.

Tony Howes

| | | |
|-----|-----------------------|-----|
| 1= | Chaffinch | 352 |
| 1= | Greenfinch | 352 |
| 1= | Great Tit | 352 |
| 4 | Blue Tit | 351 |
| 5 | Blackbird | 342 |
| 6 | Collared Dove | 331 |
| 7 | Gt. Sp. Woodpecker | 306 |
| 8 | Robin | 291 |
| 9 | Wood Pigeon | 282 |
| 10 | Coal Tit | 268 |
| 11 | *Jackdaw | 237 |
| 12 | Wren | 226 |
| 13 | Brambling | 162 |
| 14 | Nuthatch | 148 |
| 15 | Long-tailed Tit | 125 |
| 16 | Duncock | 114 |
| 17 | Mistle Thrush | 112 |
| 18 | Chiff-chaff | 96 |
| 19 | Siskin | 89 |
| 20 | *House Martin | 84 |
| 21 | Tawny Owl | 78 |
| 22 | Stock Dove | 77 |
| 23 | *Swift | 74 |
| 24 | Song Thrush | 73 |
| 25 | Blackcap | 62 |
| 26 | *Pink-footed Goose | 53 |
| 27= | Pheasant | 20 |
| 27= | Sparrowhawk | 20 |
| 29 | Black-headed Gull | 18 |
| 30 | Turtle Dove | 16 |
| 31 | Fieldfare | 15 |
| 32 | Willow Warbler | 13 |
| 33 | Starling | 11 |
| 34 | *Carrion Crow | 9 |
| 35 | Goldfinch | 8 |
| 36 | *Oystercatcher | 7 |
| 37= | Green Woodpecker | 6 |
| 37= | *Common Gull | 6 |
| 39= | Tree Creeper | 5 |
| 39= | *Curlew | 5 |
| 41 | Spotted Flycatcher | 3 |
| 42= | Garden Warbler | 2 |
| 42= | *Cuckoo | 2 |
| 42= | House Sparrow | 2 |
| 42= | *Swallow | 2 |
| 42= | *Lapwing | 2 |
| 42= | *Kestrel | 2 |
| 48= | Goldcrest | 1 |
| 48= | Bullfinch | 1 |
| 48= | *Rook | 1 |
| 48= | *Jay | 1 |
| 48= | Redwing | 1 |
| 48= | *Skylark | 1 |
| 48= | *Red-legged Partridge | 1 |
| 48= | *Egyptian Goose | 1 |

(55 species recorded)

EUROPE'S LARGEST SLUG

Three years ago a momentous occasion for students of Norfolk's molluscan fauna passed with barely a comment from the Naturalist community. A specimen of *Limax cinereoniger*, Europe's largest slug had been found in old woodland at the English Nature reserve at Swanton Novers, Norfolk. It was the first time the species had been recorded in the county and only the second record for East Anglia.

Don't get me wrong. I quite understand when others do not love slugs as much as I do, but I was very excited having never seen this species before. Sadly I was not permitted to visit the site which I found understandable but nevertheless frustrating.

Limax cinereoniger is not common. It occurs in old or "ancient" woodland in southern and western Britain. It is apparently intolerant of human disturbance and its presence is considered a good indicator of healthy primary woodland. Normally reaching 20cms in length and rarely 30cms it is an impressive gastropod.

At the time of the Norfolk discovery I was ignorant of the first East Anglian record and so it was that on 4th September, 1997 a bright, sunny afternoon, I found myself passing Wolves Wood near Hadleigh, Suffolk. I was on my way to the Ipswich Museum to purchase Ian Killeen's work on the Land and Freshwater Molluscs of Suffolk.

Wolves Wood is an old, mainly coppiced wood run as a reserve by the RSPB. I thought I might just have a short poke about. I did poke about and found myself five specimens of *L. cinereoniger* in and upon a pile of rotten logs in the

deep shade of a Hornbeam grove.

Believing this to be a new East Anglian site and no doubt quite carried away with enthusiasm I took one slug for the RSPB who, after kindly letting me study the animal, arranged for the find to be confirmed by Michael Kerney of the British Museum.

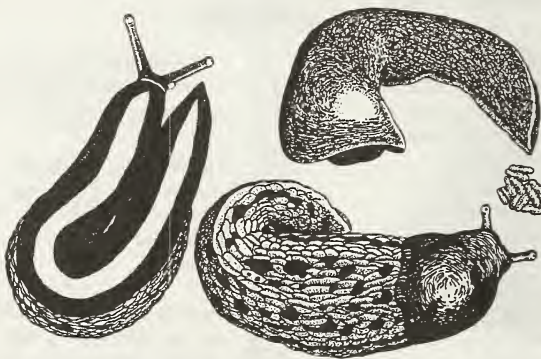
It was only later that day, having bought Mr. Killeen's book that I read of the two slugs found in Wolves Wood in 1987 but never seen again despite extensive searches.

These specimens were all of a uniform dark, brown, grey colour with a white "foot" or "sole". On a subsequent visit I found another one with spots and stripes and a jet black mantle. It also had the diagnostic tripartite "sole" as illustrated.

In 1998 I found numerous individuals under Beech trees in the Forest of Dean. Both these colour types were present and some in between. It appears to be a variable species.

This slug's nearest relative is the familiar and almost ubiquitous Great Grey Slug with aliases of Tiger Slug and Leopard Slug. These names refer to the beautiful markings on *Limax maximus*.

Having studied two specimens of *L. cinereoniger* I feel confident in stating that in behaviour it is quite a different beast to *L. maximus*. Unlike *L. maximus* it is generally very sluggish but can be roused to action quickly by picking it up. It cares not to be handled. Again unlike *L. maximus* which seeks shelter during the day this slug stayed exclusively on the surface.



LIMAX CINEREONIGER Wolf 1803

Both types described are illustrated showing tripartite sole, pale keel, the "hissing posture", the family's "fingerprint" folds on the mantle and some droppings. Similar species: *Limax maximus*.

Together with descriptions of form, colour and habitat in the text, absolute diagnostic features are: Only slug to have the tripartite sole, when present. Pale keel on back extends to halfway or more between tail and mantle (*L. maximus* only one third). Tentacles very finely spotted with minute dark spots (lens). Mantle is uniform dark colour,

A curious habit which I have not observed in *L. maximus*, was discovered when I first gave it its' nightly misting of sprayed rain-water (I treat my slugs like VIPs!). It instantly extends the front of its' mantle, drawing in head and tentacles in a surprisingly rapid and sudden movement accompanied by an audible hissing sound. I don't believe this is a defence mechanism as touching or picking up does not induce the reaction.

I fed each slug on a teaspoon of goldfish flakes supplemented with fresh mushroom every two days. The grow rapidly on this diet and produce copious amounts of slime and faeces. Their accommodation must be cleaned daily. Unlike humans they won't tolerate filth!

On 23rd September the first slug laid 99 beautiful, clear, spherical eggs, 3 mm in diameter on the surface of a carpet of moss. Between 3rd and 11th November 67 healthy young hatched. These, after being fattened on fish flakes, were returned to the site in Wolves Wood where I am pleased to say the warden and the RSPB are taking steps to ensure the slugs conservation.

When I met the warden he told me that large slugs had been seen, entwined, hanging from boughs on strings of slime in the wood. I should love to witness this, the strange mating procedure of *Limax cinereoniger*, an hermaphrodite mollusc.

I feel sure that Norfolk must have more sites for this animal. Please keep looking. For diagnostic features please see the illustration panel on page 4.

Garth M. Coupland



Anglian Water Osprey Project - In Partnership with the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust

Following an absence of over 150 years, attempts are being made by a team at Rutland Water Nature Reserve, to re-establish the Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) as a breeding species in England. The translocation project is being run in partnerships Anglian Water and the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust and is the first of its kind outside the USA.

During the past three successive summers 24 young birds have been successfully translocated from thriving populations in Scotland and released at Rutland Water. Sadly, since migration, two of the Rutland young have been recovered in West Africa.

In spite of these losses the team remains optimistic that birds will return and believes that the project is now entering a new and exciting phase. By spring the young released in the early years will have reached maturity and although rather young to breed, it is possible that, from April onwards, some may return from their overwintering grounds to prospect for suitable nesting sites. As Ospreys like to nest close to the site where they first fledged it is hoped that returning birds may choose to settle within the locality of Rutland Water. Indeed, it is this aspect of the Osprey ecology that has allowed similar projects in the USA to succeed.

It is of course possible that returning birds may choose a more distant site. In order to extend coverage the project team are hoping to encourage members of bird clubs and wildlife groups to

look out for colour-ringed Ospreys. Each year Scottish Osprey chicks are ringed with a metal BTO ring and a coloured plastic Darvic ring. The colour coding changes from year to year. The translocated chicks bear the same means of identification, but carry rings on the opposite leg to the Scottish birds. For the past three years Rutland chicks have been ringed as follows:

1996 red ring/white lettering left leg
1997 white ring/black lettering left leg
1998 ochre ring/black lettering left leg



If you see any colour-ringed Ospreys the project team would be very interested to hear from you. Please try and record the time, date and place of the sighting and as much detail as possible about the rings. We would stress, however, that the welfare of the birds must come first and attempts at reading colour rings should only be undertaken if the birds use a regular feeding perch where the leg may be visible. All sightings will be followed up and will be treated in confidence.

The project team can be contacted at:

Anglian Water Birdwatching Centre
Rutland Water Nature Reserve
Egleton, Oakham
Rutland LE15 8BT

Tel: 01572 770651

Fax: 01572 755931

website:

www.fineshade.u-net.com/rw/

If you would like to receive a leaflet about the project please forward an A5 s.a.e to the above address.

FIELD MEETINGS MAY - JULY 1999

Please note that start times are variable.

Sunday 16th May Berney Marshes

10.00 am. Full day, TG475051

This meeting was publicised at the last three meetings, including the AGM, and all the places have now been filled.

Sun. 23rd May Beeston Regis Common

11.00 am. Full day, TG165426

"Beeston Bog" is one of Norfolk's premier wildlife sites and was recently designated as a Special Area of Conservation. The habitats range from acid heath to spring-fed valley mire and the great diversity of plant life supports a wide range of invertebrates, many of which are rare. This is the first of three visits to the common this year and should be a good time for butterwort, early marsh-orchid and possibly Pugsley's marsh orchid.

Sunday 6th June Alderford Common

WILDLIFE 2000

10.30 am. Full day, TG126186

This SSSI is owned by Swannington Parish Council and managed by the Norfolk Wildlife Trust. There are a variety of habitats here including heath, scrub, damp hollows, ponds and chalk grassland (which is unusual for this part of the county). The site is noted for newts, nightingales and turtle doves. Graham Larter is the volunteer warden.

Wednesday 16th June Marston Marsh

10.30 am. Morning only, TG217057

This is an attractive local nature reserve in the Yare Valley consisting mainly of grazing marsh with a network of dykes. With luck, there should be a good show of orchids. This meeting has been re-scheduled from last year's programme as the visit was rained off by a storm of near tropical intensity. Pessimists should bring umbrellas.

Sunday 20th June Pigney's Wood

WILDLIFE 2000

10.30 am. Full day, TG298324

Pigney's Wood was established by the North Norfolk Community Woodland Trust and since 1993 several thousand trees have been planted on what was arable land. As well as the new wood, the site includes

some existing woodland and 4.8 hectares of meadowland adjacent to the North Walsham and Dilham Canal. Many members will remember the excellent talk John Sizer gave us last September.

Sat. 10th July Snettisham Coastal Park

JOINT MEETING

2.00 p.m., Afternoon only, TF648335

Bordering the Wash to the north of the car park, this area has a very rich coastal flora and habitats include shingle bank, brackish marsh and damp grassland. It is also noted for its bird life. For those who wish to make a full day's outing, the RSPB reserve is to the south of the car park. Brian Sage is a well-known all-round naturalist.

Sun. 11th July Beeston Regis Common

11.00 am. Full day, TG165426

This meeting is the second of the three visits to the common and the summer flowers and butterflies should be at their peak. For those who are interested, there will also be a workshop on hoverflies.

Sunday 18th July Strumpshaw Fen

JOINT MEETING

11.00 am. Full day, TG341066

Not only is this a fine birdwatching reserve but the meadows support an excellent variety of wildflowers and the dykes are full of aquatic plants such as water-soldier and frogbit. It is also a good place to see the Norfolk Hawker.

Saturday 31st July Coldharbour Wood

11.00 am. Full day, TL784996

This is in a lesser-known part of the Breck where there are attractive forest rides mainly on chalk. We should see plenty of Breckland plants and insects. Gillian Beckett is the BSB recorder for West Norfolk, co-author of the new Flora of Norfolk and is currently joint president of the society.

N.B. Indoor meetings from September 1999 will be held in the Sports & Leisure Centre at Easton College. Further details will be published in the next issue of *Natterjack*.

Bob Ellis

Castle Museum

The natural history collections at the Norwich Castle Museum will not be available for general study as from July 1st 1999, until further notice, although it may be possible to have limited access until December. This is due to the refurbishment and reorganisation of the museum. It is hoped that the museum will re-open as early in 2000 as possible.

Please contact the following at the Castle Museum if you have any specific queries on:

01603-223642 (AGI)

-223643 (JGG)

-223644 (AJS)

-223645 (RJD)

- or via their URL

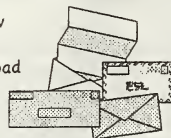
<http://www.paston.co.uk/users/ncm>

A note to CONTRIBUTORS.

The next *Natterjack* will be in August. It would be much appreciated if any correspondence could be sent to the following address, as soon as possible, and marked with NNNS on the envelope. For those with access to a computer a WORD document or an ordinary text file on disc would be most helpful.

'FF'

Francis Farrow
'Heathlands'
6 Havelock Road
Sheringham
Norfolk
NR26 8QD



MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

Members who pay by cheque are reminded that subscriptions fell due on 1 April, 1999. Current rates are **£10** for ordinary and family members and **£15** for affiliated groups. Please make cheques payable to **Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society** and send them to:

DI Richmond,
42, Richmond Rise,
Reepham,
Norfolk, NR10 4LS.

From:

Address:

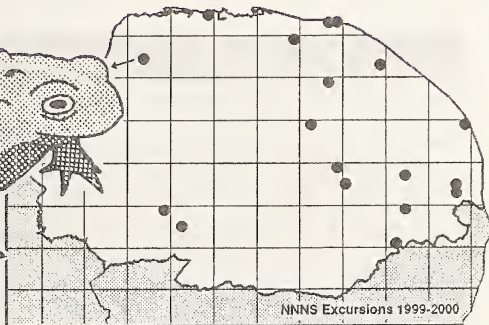
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THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK

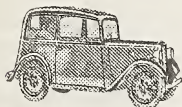


From the Chairman...

LIFTS REGISTER: A NON-STARTER!

I am disappointed but perhaps, because others have tried it before and failed, I should not be surprised. In the last issue of *Natterjack*, with our move to Easton College in mind, I asked members to offer to join a simple register of those willing to give others a lift to meetings and field trips. I have had not a single response. All I can now suggest is that individual members who cannot get to meetings should contact me (01603 457270) and I will try, either directly or via *Natterjack*, to put them in touch with members in their area. For example, I already know of a lady in Fakenham, another in Sprowston and a couple in Thorpe who will not be able to get to Easton unless someone can give them a lift. Any offers?

David Paull, Chairman



FIELD MEETINGS AUGUST - OCTOBER 1999

Please note that start times for the field meetings are variable and that our evening talks are now being held in the *Sports & Leisure Centre at Easton College*. If you have not been to the centre before, please see the accompanying map showing how to get there.

Sun. 15th August Belton Common JOINT MEETING

11.00 a.m. Full day, TG474023

We will be joining the British Plant Gall Society, the Lowestoft Field Club and the Great Yarmouth Naturalists' Society.

Sun. 29th August Ditchingham House Farm Estate *WILDLIFE 2000*

10.30 a.m. Full day, TM324915

By kind permission of Dorothy Cheyne, this is a rare opportunity to visit and record this private estate which includes Bath Hills.

Sun. 19th Sept. Beeston Regis Common

11.00 a.m. Full day, TG165426

This is our third visit to the common this year and it should be a good time to see Grass-of-Parnassus and other late-flowering plants. If conditions are right we may well see some unusual migrant birds.

Tues. 21st September 'The Otters and Rivers Project'

7.30 p.m. Room 7,

Easton College Sports & Leisure Centre
Since the programme was published, Lisa Schneidau has moved on to pastures new. Steve Henson has taken over responsibility for the project and has kindly agreed to present this illustrated talk.

Sun. 3rd October Holt Lowes

11.00 a.m. Full day, TG088383

A fungus foray with Dr. Tony Leech. Please note that we are meeting at the car park to the north-east of the Country Park off

Hempstead Road NOT in the main Country Park car park.

Sun. 10th Oct. Winterton Dunes and Church

11.00 a.m. Full day, TG499198

Looking at lichens with Dr Chris Hitch who is

Tuesday 19th October

'A view of the world through
Colin Dack's camera'

7.30 p.m. Room 7,

Easton College Sports & Leisure Centre

We will spend the evening looking at a selection of Colin's extensive and varied collection of slides. As Colin was seriously dyslexic, although it never deterred him from making a considerable and valued contribution to our Society over many years, we will be having a collection on behalf of the Waveney Valley Dyslexia Association and we hope to raise a generous donation in memory of Colin. The chairman of the association has been invited to speak briefly about the work of the charity.

the Suffolk recorder for the British Lichen Society.

Sun. 24th October Sisland Carr

11.00 a.m. Full day, TM345990

A fungus foray with Mike Woolner. Recently acquired by the Woodland Trust, Sisland Carr has areas of deciduous and coniferous wood on light soils as well as areas of wet carr and it should host a wide range of fungi. The car park is at the south-east corner of the wood and should be approached by the track from the south.

Bob Ellis, Chairman

See page 2 for maps and
photographic meetings

The quarterly bulletin
of the
Norfolk & Norwich
Naturalists' Society



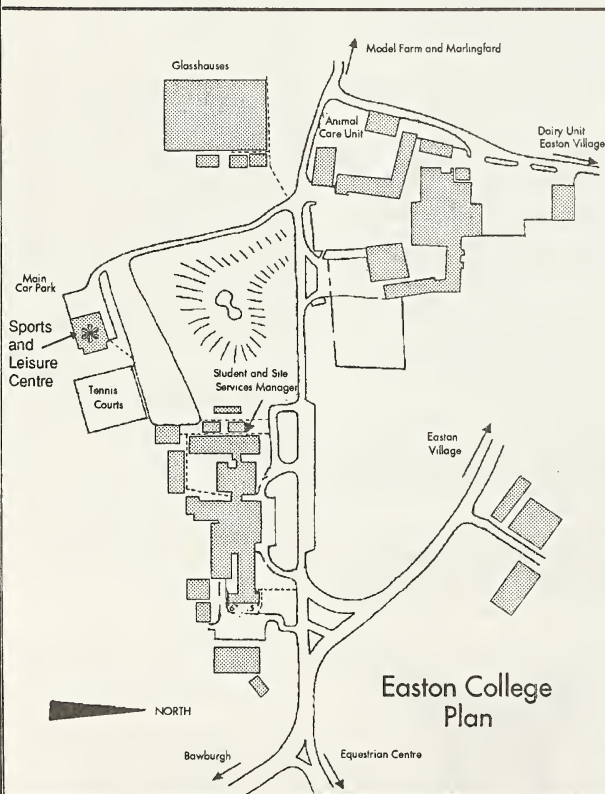
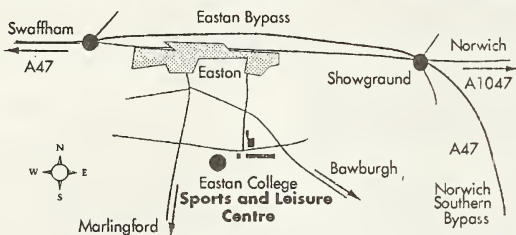
Founded 1865
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Number 66
August 1999

How To Find Easton College Sports and Leisure Centre

Leave the A47 (Norwich Southern Bypass) at either the Showground or Ringland roundabout. Follow the "Easton College" sign. About a quarter of mile down the lane, follow the green college sign (ignoring a right fork to Marlingford). After another quarter of mile at the next green college sign, turn sharp right into the college drive and follow the yellow signs (complete with swallowtail butterfly!) to sports and leisure centre. At the end of the drive, turn sharp left up to the centre. There is limited parking at the front of the centre but for the main car park behind the centre bear half-right. Walk round to the front of the building to the main entrance.

BEWARE THE SPEED HUMPS!



WOW! - Look at that....

An expression we have all come out with at times. You have just seen a beautiful flower in a meadow or maybe a colourful bird in the garden, you would have liked to photograph it but lacked the know how or the camera.

So why not come along to the Photographic Group meetings and see how it is done. Talk with people able and very willing to put you on the right track, we are only too happy to pass on our knowledge and experience.

Give it a go - come to the first meeting on:-

Monday Oct. 25th

"Bird Photography from a Hide"
by Tony Howes

Monday Nov. 22nd

"An Introduction to Digital Imaging"
by Joy and Mike Hancock

Monday Feb. 21st

"An African Safari"
by Ivan West

Monday March 27th

"High Life Photography"
by Norman Carmichael

EVERYBODY WELCOME

All meetings at Room 4,
Easton College Sports and
Leisure Centre - 7.30pm

Tony Howes

Chairman, Photographic Group
Tel: 01603 436867



BERNEY MARSHES RSPB RESERVE

May 16, 1999

This splendid day began with the bonus of a trip in the RSPB boat from Goodchild Marina, Burgh Castle, on the Waveney to the reserve landing stage on the Yare near the "Berney Arms". It was a day, however, that was tinged with regret that, because of ill-health, Michael Seago was unable to lead us. We are very grateful to the RSPB's Broads area manager, Ian Robinson, for giving up his Sunday to take over at short notice. Ian took us on two long circuits through the reserve and explained the RSPB's long-term management plan for the now-substantial area of land it has acquired. The plan is a simple one: flooding and grazing. The art is how much and when - and having the patience, and courage, to give the plan time to work. The undoubted highlight of the visit was the repeated sightings of a Collared Pratincole hawking for insects among the Swifts. Other birds that excited particular interest were male Garganey, a small flight of Whimbrel, Marsh Harrier, Little Gull, Yellow Wagtail, Cuckoo, and Avocet. Other birds noted, roughly in the order in which they were spotted, were: Mute Swan, Cormorant, Swallow, Great Crested Grebe, Shelduck, Heron, Common Tern, Common Sandpiper, Oyster-catcher, Coot, Goldfinch, Gadwall, Black-headed Gull, Magpie, Pied Wagtail, Redshank, Shoveler, Sedge Warbler, Skylark, Tufted Duck, Moorhen, Pochard, Dunlin, Ringed Plover, Kestrel, Whitethroat, Blackcap, Reed Bunting, Great Black-backed Gull, and Greenshank. Hares (probably four different animals) and a Water Vole were also seen.

Fran Neale

MARSTON MARSH

June 16, 1999

By contrast with the frightening storm that brought an abrupt end to last year's excursion, our walk round Marston Marsh, Eaton, took place in glorious sunshine.

Underfoot, following the previous week's heavy rain, the going was very muddy in places, so - for those who visit the marsh regularly all year - it was good to see a BTCV party laying board walks across the two wettest sections of the most popular path. As always with the marsh, the variations in winter and spring weather affect the flora. This year, there has hardly been an Early Marsh Orchid *Dactylorhiza incarnata* to be found but on our walk we saw plenty of Southern Marsh Orchids *D. praetermissa*, although mostly very small spikes. The success story of the marsh, the once very rare Green Figwort *Scrophularia umbrosa*, is now almost rampant and is spreading still further along the dykes and the banks of River Yare. Its cousin, Water Figwort *S. auriculata*, is also thriving but greatly outnumbered by *umbrosa*. Much of the marsh was ablaze with the yellow of buttercups, including several specimens of Celery-leaved Buttercup *Ranunculus sceleratus*.

The sun brought out the odonata in force. The ponds in the stretch of marsh beside Marston Lane were alive with Four-spotted Chasers *Libellula quadrimaculata* and throughout the marsh we found a variety of damselflies: Common Blue *Enallagma cyathigerum*, Azure *Coenagrion puella*, Blue-tailed *Ischnura elegans*, Large Red *Pyrrosoma nymphula*, and possibly Emerald *Lestes sponsa*. But the stars of the show were the dozens of Banded Demoiselle *Calopteryx splendens*.

David Paull

BEESTON COMMON

July 11, 1999

A really fine day for a field meeting is an essential requirement, such as it was when the society visited Beeston Common for the second time this year. A large gathering assembled in the lay-by as a pristine Comma visited some bramble blossom nearby. As we entered the back bog Ringlets and Meadow Browns flittered away.

We soon came upon three fine spikes of Marsh Helleborine var. *ochroleuca* which lack the red pigment of the type species. Along the path many of the Marsh Fragrant Orchids were sampled for their scent and Dodder was noted on the Gorse. Common Spotted Orchids, although plentiful were getting past their best and the few Bee Orchids present this year had gone to seed.

Large and Small Skippers were observed with the occasional Five-spot Burnet moth *trifolii* ssp. *decreta*. Up to now this year has been very poor for insects as witnessed on the numerous Hogweed and Angelica flower heads where the main occupants were Soldier Beetles *Rhagonycha fulva* who were busy ensuring next seasons population. The few Hoverflies noted were *Volucella bombylans*, *Volucella pellucens*, *Cheilosia illustrata* and *Episyrphus balteata*, also present were the small wasps *Ectemnius continuus* who were hunting for diptera with which they stock their nests in rotten wood.

Under the trees many of the Broad Buckler ferns were infested with the Knot gall (leaf terminals twisted into a ball) caused by the larvae of the fly *Chirosia betuleti*. Passing Meadow Vetchling we came to a small calcareous pond from which a large number of teneral Common Darter dragonflies took to the air as we approached, some of them barely

able to fly on their bright shining wings. A number of the Lesser Water Plantain were in flower and under the water the Stonewort *Chara vulgaris* still looked healthy but when pond dries out, as it does now each summer, the stonewort will exist as a model in chalk, only to collapse to dust when disturbed.

We proceeded to cross the centre of the main bog passed Cross-leaved Heath, Ling, Quaking Grass and the Butterworts which having flowered existed like young lettuce leaves flat upon the path. Our two Sundews, the Round-leaved and the Greater were in flower on the Sphagnum Moss mounds. Three Lesser Butterfly Orchids were still in bloom and received much attention. We passed a large patch of Meadow Sweet, to where a number of our *Dryopteris* specie ferns grow, including the scarce Crested Buckler Fern. On Ragwort plants Cinnabar moth caterpillars were feeding as we passed through large patches of Perforate and Slender St. John's Wort to see some Pyramidal Orchids.

We climbed the dry heath to the old pill box to get a grand view of the common and our local 'mountain' Beeston Bump. On descending again to the bog we passed through clumps of Purple Moor Grass and a large expanse of Wavy Hair Grass. On the bog Royal Fern and Adder's Tongue, Teasel, blue, white and pink Milkwort, Twayblades and Red Bartsia were seen. Broom with fasciation or strap growth and Emperor Dragonflies by the pond and a Red Admiral butterfly completed the 1½ hr ramble.

The afternoon session was spent in the Biology Department at Gresham School, Holt courtesy of Dr. A.R. Leech, where a good number of those present in the morning attended a workshop on Hoverflies bringing an end to an enjoyable summers day.

Ken Durrant

The Summer Wine - an algological view.

As we reach Norwich after a tiring day in the field (well, a tiring morning in the field and a tiring lunch in the pub) the botanists, entomologists and molluscologists are all looking forward to snoozing in front of the television at the end of their tiring day. Not so the algologists who have to spend a couple of hours in the lab. looking at the catch, making notes and boiling the diatoms in concentrated nitric acid, (to show them who's master!). This is not made easier if the lunch was particularly tiring. Now that we have acquired some state of the art instruments to measure electrical conductivity and pH there is the further need to check that the calibration has not wandered off during the day. So give a thought to the algologist slaving away while the rest of the group are fast asleep in front of the tele.

I sometimes wonder why I allow myself to be lured into these field days. It sounds idyllic to wander through spring woodland which has not been trodden by human feet for years. The reason for its seclusion is not that it is approached by a mile of track which is used as a testing ground for Land Rover, not that the footpath is flooded to a depth of about 1.1 wellingtons, nor the fact that the understory is young hawthorn which bears large spines. As I write two of my eight fingers are unusable due to potentially septic wounds from our last visit to the site. I know that two fingers is only 25% of those available but as I type with those two fingers it represents 100% of my capacity.

Algology is not as pointless as some forms of Natural History study. It involves such practical problems as "what is clogging the Ely Ouse Essex tunnel" and "why has the water in Hickling lagoon changed?". Roy Baker in last February's *Natterjack* reported our work at Seamer. This

involved a small group from UEA taking cores from the bed of the lake with a Hiller peat sampler while Roy stood on the jetty recording the scene for posterity and finding the process of coring excruciatingly funny (which I must admit, it probably was, except to those with mud all over their best shirts). Even our short core showed the mere had changed completely since the middle ages and was worth further study. We have been fortunate to interest a group from the University of London in taking a deeper core from the centre of the lake.

A great deal has been said and written about algologists eating treacle sponge pudding for lunch. It is not of course a practice unique to algologists. I will not explain all the attractions of such puddings. I will just point out that in most pubs the steamed pudding can be had for £2 while the steak chasseur favoured by molluscologists costs £5.75. We pensioners have to watch every penny. (Recently we have discovered the Pensioners' Lunch which includes not only the main dish but steamed sponge pudding as well, all for £3.75).

To some extent algologists are parasitic on molluscologists. The molluscologists go out in a splendid boat to dredge up Red Data book species (and masses of shirt-staining mud) and go along, not only for the treacle sponge pudding but for water quality samples, diatoms scraped from the timber piling, and mud samples from the ronds along the river (paper in preparation). They also kindly give me specimens of molluscs for me to take home and look at the gut content (diatoms are to bivalves what treacle sponge puddings are to diatomists). But what a way to spend an evening!



Keith Clarke

THOUGHTS ON AMPHIBIAN INTELLIGENCE AND SURVIVAL

Books have always led me to believe that amphibians would score poorly if given an I.Q. test. Does this speak of the I.Q. of writers who assume a newt could read the questions let alone understand them?

In order no doubt to put me in my place sometimes, my mother has the habit of announcing in front of others the poor results of my own childhood I.Q. test. Whether it is because of this supposed affinity with them or whether it is because it is the truth I don't know, but over the years I have gained great respect for the depth of amphibian intelligence. This intelligence must have contributed to their survival, as amphibians, for much longer than we have been around as primates. This intelligence is also that from which our own presumably evolved if Darwin is to be believed. Yes, I know they sometimes have difficulty crossing roads but observe St. Steven's pedestrians in Norwich on a Saturday to see just how far we have in fact evolved!

The great Herpetologist, Malcolm Smith, wrote of newts coming to the surface on his arrival above their tanks to wait for food, I trained, very quickly I recall, a small band of Common Frogs and Toads to come to me across my walled pond enclosure to a certain flat stone. Here I would feed them nightly on delicious slugs, worms and various arthropods. It is of course unscientific to state that their food was delicious, however, they ate it with relish much as human children devour beefburgers at Macdonalds. I achieved this by shining a torch when I fed them at their individual stations around the pond. Over a number of nights the torchlight became the symbol of an immediate meal and they all soon began to come to the flat stone when light fell on it.

Whilst thinking about training animals I considered so called intelligent mammals such as police dogs that can be trained to leap through flaming hoops. No amphibian would do that. They are not so stupid!

I new a great and ancient naturalist in Sussex who for several years observed a large, female toad which climbed to the top of a tall, flowering hedge to pick off the large nectar-feeding moths which visited the flowers at night. How did she discover this? How did she know where to go? How did she remember each year to climb there? Toads are known to loiter with intent to feed on the occupants at the entrance to beehives. We too have our favourite restaurants. My observations of toads in captivity show that they will eat continually until earlier meals are forced, undigested out of their rear ends. We don't do this but I wonder what makes us so sure of our next meal?

One could argue that the examples above merely show a simple Pavlovian type of response to a stimulus not worthy of the title intelligence. I would say that virtually all that we do in our complex lives is simply response to stimuli. We differ from our amphibian brothers only in the complexity of our responses and their stimuli. The degree of difference between us is relative to the size of our relative brains. Intelligence should be measured in terms of quality not quantity. The quality is decided by suitability of the response to the stimulus in terms of how it increases the individuals chances of survival. I suppose the point I'm trying to make is that amphibians are not dim, just small. Perhaps also I'm trying to bring us down a peg or two, clearly a trait inherited from my mother!

Whilst thinking about survival I remember a remarkable incident from my childhood newt-keeping days. Having released some Smooth Newts after watching them breeding someone took my "empty"

tank, still full of water and left it in our cellar. A year later I found it and discovered many healthy, although small, newt larvae. These had hatched and lived on apparently nothing (or possibly each other) in that cold, dark environment. Naked and small I wonder how they survive the northern winters or the filthy water some live in. I marvel at their ability to grow new limbs after amputation. I take my hat off to them!

Returning to intelligence one final observation reminded me why I love studying natural history which always throws up questions with each new experience. I was in Glen Coe one spring and found a male Palmate Newt crossing a fast flowing tributary of the River Coe some eight feet wide by means of a fallen bough. Did he know he would be swept away by the current? Did he deliberately seek out the crossing to reach the swamps and ponds beyond? Did he remember from another year the crossing point? When credited, by Man, with an instinct to walk downhill to find water why did he climb up and then over the bough? Why did he not fall from the three inch wide bridge? What incredible odds would be needed to make chance or coincidence the answer to the riddle of the newt's bridge? Surely intelligence far greater than we credit him with was involved? Surely responses to stimuli far more complex than we believe him capable of was involved?

Garth M. Coupland



I'VE FIGURED IT OUT FREDDY... THE BEST TIME TO CATCH 'EM IS WHEN THEIR HEADS ARE FULL OF "BUSINESS!"

Congratulations to:

Alec Bull

as the recipient of this years

Sidney Long Memorial Medal



Every two years or so, the Society and the Norfolk Wildlife Trust jointly make the above award to someone who has made an outstanding contribution to nature conservation in the county. We are delighted that this year the medal is to be awarded to Alec Bull, co-author of the magnificent new 'Flora of Norfolk' and currently joint president of the Society. The medal will be presented at the Trust annual meeting at the new Ecotech Centre, Swaffham on Friday, October 15. We hope that Society members who are also Trust members will try to get to the meeting to support Alec on this very happy occasion.

HOME BIRDS II

Our garden at Watlington, near King's Lynn, is very different from those of Geoffrey Kelly and Gillian Beckett, but perhaps for that reason some notes on the birds we have seen here over the last eight years may be of interest.

The garden is small, but pretty wild, and with a number of trees and shrubs, including conifers and two large Lime trees. Arable land is on two sides, and we have a high, mainly Elm and Ivy hedge in front.

Unlike the previous articles in this series, our list comprises only birds seen actually in the garden, i.e. at or below the level of the bungalow roof. We put food out all the year round, including nuts, meat, fats and bread on the ground, and nuts and sunflower seeds in suspended containers.

The 25 species shown opposite have been seen each year (1992 - 1999). They are listed roughly in order of frequency, as we have kept no records of actual numbers seen. Another 23 species have been only rarely noticed.

RM & SM Payne

Annual species:-

- 1 Starling
- 2 House Sparrow
- 3 Collared Dove
- 4 Greenfinch
- 5 Chaffinch
- 6 Blackbird
- 7 Blue Tit
- 8 Great Tit
- 9 Dunnock
- 10 Robin
- 11 Jackdaw
- 12 Magpie
- 13 Coal Tit
- 14 Black-headed Gull (winter)
- 15 Pied Wagtail (winter)
- 16 Rook
- 17 Song Thrush
- 18 Long-tailed Tit
- 19 Jay
- 20 Wren
- 21 Wood Pigeon (more frequently in recent years)
- 22 Common Gull (winter)
- 23 Pheasant
- 24 Goldfinch
- 25 Sparrowhawk

Rarely noticed species:-

- 26 Mallard - occ. 2 or 3 on lawn (nearest large pond 250m away)
- 27 Fieldfare - Jan/Dec 1996
- 28 Redwing - Mar 94/w. 96-7/Feb 99
- 29 Siskin - Feb 94/Feb 95/Ma-Apr 98
- 30 Linnet - 1992-97 only
- 31 Mistle Thrush - Mar 96 / May 99
- 32 Tree Creeper - Nov 93 / Jan 99
- 33 Spotted Flycatcher - 1992 / 1994
- 34 Red-leg. Partridge - not since 97
- 35 Swallow - (resting in nos. on roof
- 36 House Martin evening 27/8/94)
- 37 Moorhen - Dec 1991
- 38 Goldcrest - Nov 92 ?overlooked
- 39 Green Woodpecker - Jun 1993
- 40 Heron - Jan 95 (no pond)
- 41 Bullfinch - Jun 1995
- 42 Willow Warbler - Aug 1996
- 43 Nuthatch - Jun 97 (eating seeds)
- 44 Budgerigar - (escape) Apr 1997
- 45 Whitethroat - May 1997
- 46 Gt Sp Woodpecker - June 1997 feeding on nuts
- 47 Kestrel - taking prey June 1997
- 48 Turtle Dove - June 1999

REMINDERS

A reminder to those who have not yet paid their subs - £10 please ASAP to the Treasurer. Cheques payable to Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society.

D I Richmond,
42, Richmond Rise, Reepham,
Norfolk, NR10 4LS.

With bird records in mind could members also please remember to send their monthly records to the County Bird Recorder for the Society:

Giles Dunmore
49 Nelson Road, Sheringham,
Norfolk, NR26 8DA

Europe's Largest Slug (*Natterjack* - no. 65)

Unfortunately part of the last sentence in the inset illustration panel on p4 was 'lost'. For those who wish to add it to their copy it is as follows:

never marbled or large spotted. Larger skin tubercles than *L. maximus*.

HAWKS AND HAWKERS

HOOKED BEAK BRIGADE

Earlier this year I had been given as a present a day with a falconer. After a rundown on the various birds and the different methods they use to catch their prey a display followed.

The falconer put different birds through their paces. The most magical for me was a Saker Falcon, the great speed and power of this bird as it came to the lure was breathtaking, often so low that the wing tips were skimming the grass. Or again, coming in from a higher station it was moving at such speed that the sound from its wings as it passed reminded me of fizzing pop. The sheer elegance of this bird in flight was amazing, at one point the other guest and myself were asked to stand just a yard apart, the falconer then swung the lure in such a manner that the Saker came hurtling down the meadow and

between us at head height. This contrasted greatly with the Barn Owl's slow, silent flight.

A walk through the woods with a Harris Hawk showed yet another method of catching your dinner. Sitting it out watching for movement this bird followed us through the trees for about a mile, never far away, its leg bells could be heard as it flew to catch up, it was just like taking the dog for a walk.

I enjoyed seeing so many different birds of prey, I had watched the diminutive Kestrel adept at catching mice and voles, and the mighty awe inspiring power of the Bald Eagle capable of killing a Roe Deer. The crushing grip of this mighty bird, weighing in at 10½ lbs., required the use of a special glove.

Tony Howes



LIQUIDATED!

We have all heard the phrase "Red in tooth and claw" - but drowning? I was intrigued by a letter in *The Times* from 10-year-old Eleanor Batchelor from Hampshire. She described how she saw a bird of prey trying to drown a Blackbird in a puddle-filled pothole. It sat on the Blackbird so that it was completely submerged. Was this, she asked, a common phenomenon? Incidentally, the blackbird survived because Eleanor scared away the hawk. The letter brought this response from Chris Dowsett, of The Grange, Burgh Castle: "Eleanor Batchelor wonders if birds of prey often drown their victims. Three years ago my wife and I sailed up the River Yare in Norfolk and observed a Black-headed Gull swoop and gather up a mouse from the river bank. The gull then settled on the water and held the mouse submerged until its struggles ceased." Have any members observed this ingenious if rather gruesome method of killing prey?

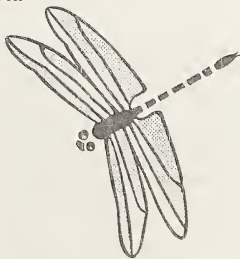
David Pauli

I think it may be more usual for gulls to drown their prey, particularly the larger species. I have seen Gr. Black-backed Gulls attack and subsequently drown Redwings as they were crossing the North Sea in October.

'FF'

A WELCOME VISITOR

My eye caught a movement near the garden pond, I stood by the window and watched, then a large dragonfly came into view. I went outside as quickly as possible, it was still there, hovering over the water near the lilies. Much to my surprise it was a female Emperor, the first time I had seen one round the pond in the three years since it was put in. It settled on a lily leaf and began laying eggs - I charged back inside for the camera. On getting back outside the insect was in flight again and within a few seconds it went over the fence out of sight. But with luck I should have a few eggs that maybe in two years time will hatch into these beautiful dragonflies.



They have the largest wingspan of any British dragonfly, the male is a brilliant blue on the abdomen with a black stripe, and the female is green. This was indeed a welcome visitor.

Tony Howes

Michael J. Seago

An era in the history of ornithology in Norfolk ended on 9th July with the death of Michael Seago, aged 73. He began his interest in birdwatching in the early 1940's with regular visits to Breydon where his particular interest in wading birds developed. He joined the Society in 1943 and was soon having observations published in the Society's *Transactions* and elsewhere. In 1953 it was felt that the county should have a dedicated annual bird report to be published jointly by the (then) Norfolk Naturalists Trust and the Society and Michael was persuaded by Bernard Riviere, Dick Bagnall-Oakely, Ted Ellis and others to take on the role of editor.

The first edition under his leadership appeared in 1954 covering the events of 1953 and in the Autumn of 1998 the forty-fifth annual publication, dealing with the records for 1997, was published with Michael still acting as senior editor, a unique record in British ornithological recording. During this long period he was responsible for the introduction of a number of features now taken for granted in such publications, namely line drawings and photographs, the latter having been in full colour since the 1986 Report. These innovations and a much more detailed Classified List in recent years, have received national recognition by awards in the 'Best Annual Bird Report' competition organised by the magazine *British Birds* - joint first for the 1995 edition and a second place for 1997. The Society alone became responsible for the report after the 1992 edition and as a result of sales and Michael's ability to attract sponsorship, the ever increasing size did not result in any substantial additional costs to our funds.

In addition to his role with bird reports, Michael produced two editions of his book *Birds of Norfolk*, first published by Jarrolds in 1966 and has been a regular contributor to the local press for almost half a century; for the last 12 years, as a member of the team writing the daily 'In the Countryside' column in *The Eastern Daily Press*. For the last two years much of his time and effort has been dedicated to the preparations, with a team of friends, of a definitive history of The Birds of Norfolk which is due for publication in August. It is a great sorrow to all those involved with this book that Michael did not survive to see this monumental work of over 600 pages complete with his selection of line drawings and coloured photographs, reach fruition.

All his adult life Michael has been very active in supporting local natural history organisations, holding various offices with the Great Yarmouth Naturalists' Society, the Norfolk Wildlife Trust, where he served on the Council for 33 years and the Society. He was the Society's President in both 1962/63 and 1993/94. At the time of his death he was a Vice President of both the Trust and the Society. He has also devoted much time and effort on conservation matters particularly those associated with reserve management and the protection of rare breeding birds. Until his retirement from a full time career at the Norwich Union Insurance Group in 1986, all these activities were carried out in his spare time. In recognition of his long and dedicated service to conservation in Norfolk Michael was presented with the Sydney Long Memorial Medal at the Annual General meeting of the Trust in 1993.

He will be greatly missed by all those many people who he has inspired and encouraged through his writings and wide circle of personal contacts to treasure Norfolk's wildlife, particularly its birds. We extend to Sylvia and her family our deepest sympathy.

Don Dorling

THE NORFOLK BIRD REPORT

No. 1



1953

Dr. C.P. Petch

In my paper on Norfolk Botanists, (*A Flora of Norfolk*, Beckett & Bull 1999), I stated that the late Dr. C.P. Petch returned to his family home at the Manor House, Wolferton on his retirement. His son, Dr. Michael Petch, has written and pointed out that in fact,

Dr. Charles Petch was born and brought up in North Wootton and is buried in the churchyard there, only buying the Manor House at Wolferton on his retirement. I apologise for the error and am sorry for any distress this may have caused.

Alec Bull

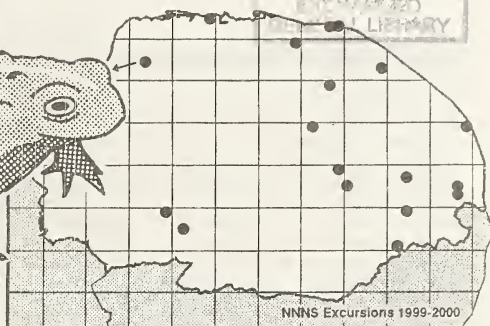
A note to CONTRIBUTORS.

The next *Natterjack* will be in November. Could you please send all correspondence/disc to the following address, as soon as possible, and marked with NNNS on the envelope. 'FF'

Francis Farrow
'Heathlands'
6 Havelock Road
Sheringham
Norfolk
NR26 8QD



THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK



Toad-in-the-hole....

Since the last 'Natterjack' I have received a letter from a member wishing to congratulate Keith Clarke for his humorous account of a diatom hunter in the field. The following is taken from that letter:

"I know absolutely nothing about algology whatsoever but the amusing way in which he presented the subject was a joy to read. If only more of us could write in such a way."

There's a challenge for 2000! Talking of which, how about a 'look-back' page for February. Could as many members as possible please send a couple of sentences of a particular natural history highlight or 'red-letter' day. It would be particularly good to cover as many years as possible - Date, place and item of interest with a short comment is all that is required. Any contributions can be sent the usual way or for those of you who are not afraid of the millennium bug by e-mail to: francis.f@virgin.net

In this issue I would like to draw your attention to the 'Norfolk Bird Atlas' which is about to start in earnest this winter, the Bat Conference Report where new discoveries have been made and of course our prize crossword!

Finally, my thanks to Garth Coupland who has supplied some excellent natural history cartoons which will feature when possible in 'Garth's Corner'.

'FF'

FIELD & INDOOR MEETINGS NOV 1999 - JAN 2000

Please note that start times for the field meetings are variable and that our evening talks are now being held in the Sports & Leisure Centre at Easton College.

Sunday 7th November

Holkham 11.00 a.m. Full day,
TF890448

Meeting at Lady Ann's Drive, this is mainly for wintering geese with David Paull and Eunice Phipps

Tuesday 16th November

'An Exercise in Co-operation'

Gillian Beckett/Alec Bull
7.30 p.m. Room 7, Easton College
Sports & Leisure Centre
THE PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS.

Tuesday 21st December

'Three Men in a Boat'

Dr. Roy Baker, Keith Clarke, Derek Howlett
7.30 p.m. Room 7, Easton College
Sport & Leisure Centre
This should be a very entertaining presentation by three intrepid experts on aquatic life and pub lunches. It should also be something of a seasonal social occasion.



Tuesday 18th January

'Identifying British Butterflies'

Dr. Bernard Watts
7.30 p.m. Room 7, Easton College
Sports & Leisure Centre

This promises to be a very instructive talk. Hopefully, Dr. Watts will be using a two-projector system to allow us to directly compare those species that are more difficult to separate.



Bob Ellis, Chairman
Programme Committee

NOTE

Change of Photographic
Group programme

Due to unforeseen
circumstances the speakers for
22nd November and 27th March
will now change places



Tony Howes
01603 436867

See page 2 for Bryophyte
meetings

The quarterly bulletin
of the
Norfolk & Norwich
Naturalists' Society



Founded 1869
Registered Charity No. 291044

Number 67
November 1999

East Anglian Bryological Excursions 1999 - 2000

The following excursions are planned for the Autumn & Spring of 1999-2000. Beginners will be most welcome; the only equipment needed is a hand lens (x10 or x20), and some paper packets for collecting into. Meetings will only be cancelled if it snows, or there is hard frost. All meetings will start at 10.30am, unless otherwise stated. For further information, contact John Mott or Robin Stevenson (addresses below).

Sunday 7 November:

Tuddenham & Cavenham Heaths, Suffolk, recording for the Suffolk Flora. Meet at TL748.724, on the track leading NE from the centre of the village.

Saturday 20 November:

Holt Lowes. This site has much to offer, including many *Sphagna* and *Hookeria lucens*. Meet in the Holt Country Park car park TG081.375.

Sunday 19 December:

The walls of Burgh Castle, followed by Waveney Forest, Fritton. Meet at Church Farm Country Club car park, TG476.051 for Burgh Castle, and then Waveney Forest picnic place TG466.007.

Saturday 15 January:

Colney Hall Memorial Park. Meet at Colney Hall, TG170.083. (We may visit Colney and Earham churchyards afterwards).

Sunday 23 January:

Thursford Woods NWT reserve, and environs. Meet in the (rather small) car park at TF979.333. As parking space is very limited, please try and share cars.

Sunday 27 February:

Rosary Cemetery, Norwich. Meet at Chapel, TG243.084. Go east along Thorpe Road from station, and turn sharp left at the bend into Rosary Rd. The cemetery entrance is immediately on the right. Gates open at 11 am. There is room to park in the drive.

Sunday 12 March:

King's Lynn and environs, to 'get your eye in' on aliens such as *Lophocolea semiteres*, *Hennediella macrophylla* and *Didymodon australasiae*. Meet at TF665.196 (Bawsey - Mintlyn Wood).

Saturday 25 March:

Barton Broad and Catfield. Meet at Catfield Church, TG382.214.

Sunday 2 April:

East Harling Common. Meet at TL998.877, at end of rough track heading north from East Harling. Small car park on left through locked gate.

Contacts:

Robin Stevenson, College of West Anglia, Tennyson Avenue, King's Lynn, Norfolk, PE30 2QW.
Tel: (01553) 761144 x 248, or home (01553) 766788.

John Mott, 62 Great Melton Road, Hethersett, Norwich, NR9 3HA.
Tel: (01603) 810442.

Flycatcher with a Headache

September 1999

BANG! - I looked up from my book to see a few feathers floating down from the lounge window. This has happened on several occasions in the past, a trick of the light perhaps, mostly the bird concerned gives the glass a glancing blow and continues on its way. This window strike, however, seemed to be a head on hit, for a limp body could be seen lying on the ground. I went outside to pick it up, fearing the worst, - it was a female Pied Flycatcher - the wings were o.k. as were the legs, a drop of blood hung from the bill and the eyes were closed, but it was alive and breathing. I took it indoors and for a half an hour it laid still and unmoving, but slowly it seemed to rally. First the eyes opened, then it showed interest in my movements, finally it flew round the room a couple of times and out through the open door. May the force be with you little bird.

Tony Howes

The Dove and the Toad

Not an unusual pub name, but a strange happening in our garden at the end of March. My notes for the day read as follows:

Still hordes of young male toads. One found itself standing near a collared dove. It moved closer, the dove reacted by turning slightly sideways and lifting its wings high in the air. The toad came closer still and the dove shied away, then ran a few steps away from it into the boarder. At once the little toad, which was probably 3-4 years old, followed it with great energetic leaps. They then came down the garden towards the house for about twenty feet, the dove in front, periodically stopping and lifting its wings as before, then hurrying on when the toad got too close. At this point we thought their travel together was just a coincidence as they were making for a pond, but as it reached the bird bath, the dove turned to one side towards it and so did the toad. The dove made a circuit of the bird bath and then went back the way it had come with the same wing stretching as before, the toad still following closely behind. All of this had taken more than five minutes and eventually brought the dove back to the point where it had all begun. At this point it gave up and flew off across the garden, leaving the toad presumably victor in this odd encounter. The toad itself, presumably quite exhausted with its leaping, then sat absolutely still for the next half an hour. If we hadn't seen it we wouldn't have believed it.

Gillian Beckett

Review of the Birds of Norfolk

(Moss Taylor, Michael Seago, Peter Allard & Don Dorling)

When I first heard of this project I seriously wondered whether the county needed another book about its avifauna. After all, I had read Michael Seago's excellent book and as a regular subscriber to the Norfolk Bird Club magazine I thought I was well on top with my county's birds. I only had to pick up this beautifully produced tome to find out how wrong I was in my initial thinking and also how little I really did know.

The stunning jacket pictures by Norman Arlott immediately catch the eye and prepare the reader for the quality of what lies inside, more than 500 pages of well written text, wonderful line drawings by a variety of artists and a series of colour photographs illustrating habitats and key species. The four main authors have called upon some 40 other amateur and professional experts in their area, to assist them in this project. This makes the book very authoritative, and it is so well edited or the aims were so well defined that each section passes seamlessly to the next. I cannot believe that there can have been many such projects ever attempted at even a national level, never mind on the smaller county scale.

The introductory chapters are all masterful and give a fascinating historical, but also a very up-to-date view, of Norfolk ecology and its birdlife. There are chapters on Habitats, Conservation, Bird Ringing, Migration, and an account of the history and personalities involved in Norfolk Ornithology up to the present day. The chapter by Andy Stoddart on bird migration provides a thorough synthesis of migration patterns and weather systems on a month by month basis. This introductory section clearly illustrates how we can only understand the present by careful assessment of the past.

This is the theme running through the systematic list section that forms the major part of the book. This is not the boring section we have come to expect in such volumes. Each species is handled by one author and uses a common format. First a reference to the wider distribution of the species, then its status in the UK puts us in perspective before looking at what happens in the county. This begins with historical references which provide a fascinating glimpse of an earlier Norfolk, look at the section on the Great Bustard. More recent records come next, deriving from Michael Seago's *Birds of Norfolk* and the Norfolk Bird Reports. However these are augmented by data from numerous, more recent surveys, plus information collated from the growing number of really informed observers throughout the county, including ringing and migration data. These provide a wealth of information that most birders will not really have had access to, well illustrated in the account of the Horsey cranes. All of this information is summarised beautifully, bringing us fully up to date. The quality and interest is there for common or rare species alike.

The colour photographs are good but annoyingly are all together in one section. The line drawings are excellent and it is good to see some by Richard Richardson to whom the book is dedicated.

This book is a fitting way to round off the millennium. It is a tribute to everything that has been achieved in Norfolk Ornithology over the past 400 years, by so many dedicated observers. None finer than the four authors of this excellent book and it is a fitting memorial to Michael Seago. It should also be noted that all the royalties go to conservation projects in Norfolk, so go ahead and get a copy - expert or beginner there is so much in it for everyone.

Published by **Pica Press**. ISBN 1-873403-86-0. £35.

David Horsley

FUNGUS FORAY HOLT LOWES

October 3rd 1999

Around twenty members, ranging from real experts (Reg and Lil Evans were there, bless 'em) to 5-year-old virgin forayers, met with the aims of sharing field identification knowledge and of building up a species list for Holt Lowes.

This heathland and valley mire SSSI in North Norfolk is scheduled for extensive management work including the introduction of cattle.

An early find was a troop of Hare's Ears (*Otidea onotica*), a large buff-coloured cup-fungus flushed rose-petal pink. Such was the abundance of fungi that we had travelled less than 200 yards before it was time to turn back for a picnic lunch which was enlivened by the appearance of a fearless Wood Mouse (*Apodemus sylvaticus*) which ate crumbs and posed for extreme close-ups.



Those who stayed for the afternoon made a more determined effort

and actually got on to the heath. Here the species were fewer but different. The spring-time fire had created conditions for the diverse fungi which favour burnt ground as a habitat, and the cup-fungus *Plicaria trachycarpa* and the agaric *Tephrocye rancida* were interesting additions to the list. I estimate that well over 80 species were recorded but I won't know until I receive Reg and Lil's list; they always send one and it always contains many more names than mine!

Tony Leech

Homing Slugs

Recently there has been research into the homing capabilities of snails. However for you throw them, they apparently return to base.

Over the last few weeks two Leopard Slugs have reappeared several times to the same spot on my terrace in spite of my removing them to an anonymous location over the garden fence.

I cannot believe that there is an endless supply of these slugs at that spot, so can only assume that, yes, they do home back to their favourite patch, which is only about 3 feet wide.

Could Garth Coupland or others say whether they have experienced similar observations?

Janet E. Smith

An Auk With Problems

Earlier this year on a visit to the Farne Islands it was evident that nesting Puffins were having a hard time getting into their burrows complete with sand eels for their young. They were coming in off the sea often being chased by a large Herring or Black-backed Gull and on occasion even a Black-headed Gull. The Puffins were often grabbed by their assailants, losing a few feathers in the process, but the sand eels were the target. It meant a quick low flight, straight to the burrow and in, if they dithered the fish were lost.

This diminutive auk, about the size of a Blackbird, seems to be holding its own on the Farnes at

the moment with many thousands nesting there. Having however to face these pirates is not in their best interest. This little 'clown of the ocean' needs all the luck it can get.

Tony Howes



POOL FROGS

May I ask readers who have any personal observations concerning the Pool Frog, *Rana lessonae*, or indeed the until-recently easily confused Edible Frog, *Rana esculenta*, or know of such personal observations (other than in the Castle Museum and Norfolk Record Office, which MSS have already been searched), to let me know. This appeal is linked with my current commission by the Herpetological Conservation Trust to carry out a literature/archive search for this species. There is some degree of urgency, for in order to meet my deadline re submitting the final report I would like to hear of relevant information by no later than early December 1999. Please make contact by writing initially, to me as follows:

Geoffrey Kelly,
Mynhome,
20 Buxton Road,
Frettenham,
Norwich, NR12 7NG.



Norfolk Bird Atlas - a request for help

This year sees the start of fieldwork for the new Norfolk Bird Atlas, a project which is being substantially financed by the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society and which forms part of its Wildlife 2000 initiative to document the fauna and flora of Norfolk at the turn of the century. Plans for this exciting new survey were originally conceived over two years ago, since when pilot fieldwork has been carried out both during the winter and breeding season.

Unlike The Norfolk Bird Atlas, written by Geoffrey Kelly in 1986, the new one will include maps of both the winter and breeding season distributions, as well as showing relative orders of abundance for each species. So far, such a detailed county atlas for birds has not been attempted in the British Isles.

The pilot winter atlas survey was undertaken during the 1998-99 winter with the aim of trying out the recording methods, instructions and recording forms on a group of 23 observers in a variety of habitats. Counts were carried out in 22 tetrads, each of which was visited on two dates, one in each half of the winter period. Initially doubts were expressed as to whether it would be possible to count all the birds encountered in the tetrad. In the event this did prove possible, even if each visit took longer than originally anticipated. It also proved to be a very enjoyable and rewarding experience, and most observers were surprised by some of the results obtained.

A total of 138 species was recorded, of which 8 were found in all 22 tetrads - Woodpigeon, Wren, Robin, Blackbird, Mistle Thrush, Blue Tit, Great Tit and Chaffinch. Interestingly these are virtually the same

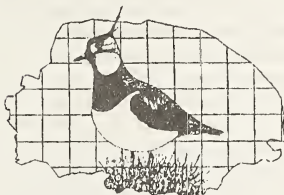
species which have been recorded annually in over 90% of the 1km squares in NE Norfolk during the BTO's Breeding Bird Survey since 1995; the only exception being Mistle Thrush. An additional 12 species were noted in 91-95% of the tetrads visited during the pilot winter survey - Kestrel, Pheasant, Skylark, Pied Wagtail, Dunnock, Song Thrush, Long-tailed Tit, Jay, Magpie, Starling, House Sparrow and Greenfinch. It is perhaps surprising, and encouraging to find Song Thrush in this list, although only 85 Song Thrushes were found in 21 tetrads, compared with 744 Blackbirds in 22.

Other species pairs which make interesting comparisons are Sparrowhawk with a total count of 21 in 16 tetrads and Kestrel with 32 in 20; Red-legged Partridge 228 in 18 and Grey Partridge 71 in 11; Fieldfare 1,985 in 13 and Redwing 293 in 16; Marsh Tit 41 in 15 and Willow Tit 9 in 4; House Sparrow 612 in 20 and Tree Sparrow 1 in 1. This last figure really does demonstrate just how rare the Tree Sparrow has become in the county.

Perhaps not surprisingly, more Woodpigeons were counted (7,182) during the pilot winter atlas survey than any other species. Other widespread species (recorded in over 50% of the tetrads covered) with total counts in excess of a thousand were Black-headed Gull (3,886), Lapwing (3,044), Rook (2,015), Fieldfare (1,985), Common Gull (1,860), Starling (1,657), Chaffinch (1,156) and Mallard (1,027). Three species were notable for their low counts - Lesser Black-backed Gull with a total of only 7 in 3 tetrads, Siskin 99 in 9 and Redpoll 28 in 5.

The new Norfolk Bird Atlas will be able to provide similar comparative quantitative data (on a larger scale), in addition to each species' distribution, both during the winter and breeding seasons.

The results of this summer's pilot breeding season survey are still being analysed and will be available during the winter. In the meantime we are now looking for volunteers to take on tetrads for the full survey, fieldwork for which will commence in December 1999.



NORFOLK BIRD ATLAS

The full survey will run for a period of 3-5 years, depending on the response from observers. The more people taking on tetrads, the quicker will the atlas appear. For the winter survey, the aim will be to record the maximum numbers of each species using each tetrad (2 x 2 km square) between December and February inclusive, in any of the winters during which fieldwork is carried out. Thus all casual records will be welcome, as well as those counts made during the two visits, one in each half of the winter period. The same tetrad will not need to be surveyed in full in subsequent winters.

Each recording visit (the first between the start of December and mid-January, the second between mid-January and the end of February) is expected to last 3-5 hours, during which observers are asked to cover as much of the tetrad as possible, certainly visiting all the habitat types present. A preliminary visit to the tetrad is recommended to obtain permission to enter any private land. A letter of introduction will be provided for all recorders. All of the national land-owning bodies have been contacted and the National Trust, for instance, has provided a

letter of introduction which can be shown to tenant farmers when seeking permission to visit their land. Details about the breeding season survey will be available before next spring and it is hoped that the same observers will be able to visit the same tetrads for both the surveys.

Without exception, this project has been very well received by all the conservation bodies within the county, and, as well as the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society, financial support has been provided by the RSPB, Norfolk Wildlife Trust and Cley Bird Club. To all of these the organisers are most grateful.

Offers of help with the fieldwork commencing in December this year should be sent to:

Moss Taylor
4 Heath Road,
Sheringham, NR26 8JH,

or by 'phone on 01263-823637
or e-mail at
mosstaylor@btinternet.com.

Please include your name, address, phone number and tetrad(s) that you would like to cover. Allocation will be on a first come, first serve basis, but it is often easier if the observer is already familiar with the tetrad or is covering it for another survey. Regular updates about the progress of the project will appear in the pages of *The Norfolk Natterjack*.

Finally I would like to express my gratitude to Andy Wilson for extracting the data from the pilot winter atlas survey and for commenting on a draft of this article, and to him and the other members of the Atlas Working Group - Alan Collins, Graham Coxall, Phil Heath and Mike Reed for all their hard work in getting this project off the ground.

Moss Taylor

Through the Lens!

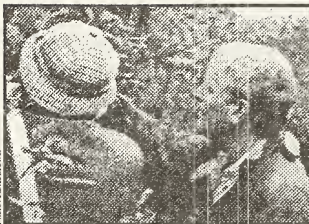
"Rex, could you do all that again - the leaf, the lens, the notebook? We'd like to film it." I had just found a bramble leaf covered with a rust fungus, peered at it through my lens, popped it into an old film canister and made a note of the find. The request was from the crew from BBC TV Bristol who had joined us on Beeston Common (19th Sept. 1999) to take what they called an unobtrusive part in our field meeting. I waited for their preparations to be completed and repeated the performance. "That was great. We'd just like to do it again."

We did it again. "Now we'd like to shoot it from a different angle". That took even longer to prepare. Finding enough leg room for a large tripod on Beeston Common is not easy, especially when the whole shot supposedly depends on one of the legs being just where a particularly difficult and stubborn tussock has already established itself.

So much for not upsetting our routine! Never mind. I am sure it is fair to say those of us who attended enjoyed the experience of seeing how a documentary programme is built up tiny piece by tiny piece. The crew were politeness itself and made it all rather fun. Julian Pettiifer who is the presenter really did join in, showing genuine interest and wide knowledge, making time to chat to most of us.

Who do you think of when Beeston Common is mentioned? Ken Durrant of course and Ken was in the midst of it all with a radio mike tucked away in an inside pocket giving his normal enthusiastic, knowledgeable and amusing account of species after species while all the while the camera rolled.

The programme to be shown next Spring is looking for proof of global warming in the northward movement of species. Being observers of



Ken with Julian Pettiifer

natural phenomenon we expressed the view that the expansion of species ranges is a very complicated topic and many factors are involved, not just one. Topical bandwagons do not feature in the Transactions of a Society such as ours! Having said that we did find one midge gall which was until recently confined to the southernmost counties of England and another which but recently crept in so we were able to add to the species list of Beeston Common.

What I believe we did demonstrate was how we go about the task of recording the wildlife of Norfolk and how it contributes to our Wildlife 2000 project. That incidentally is how it all came about. The producers had seen our Wildlife 2000 page on the internet and deduced we had a positive contribution to make.



Rex Hancy



NATIONAL BAT CONFERENCE 1999

This year Ripon in Yorkshire was the chosen locality for this annual Bat Conservation Trust event. Whether it was the 200+ miles, or the price of accommodation that meant only four East Anglian bat people ventured north over the weekend of September 10th / 11th / 12th (or what) I'm not sure - certainly the programme was varied and interesting.

It all started in earnest internationally on the Saturday morning with The Work of Bat Conservation International (the American/world organisation) with an account of their perceived role and wide ranging activities of their organisation. There was an interesting account of the bats of Moldova (honest - there is such a place - look it up in your atlas!) and a tantalising glimpse into the bats present on the Brandberg Mountain in the Namib Desert where an expedition from Leeds University and Raleigh International had recently been.

Henry Schofield working for the Vincent Wildlife Trust had spent time tracking Bechstein's bats in a wood while Frank Greenaway gave his customary good account - with excellent slides - on his work on tracking Barbastelles in Sussex.

Final slot before lunch was Sue Parsons and John Goldsmith (the dynamic duo) with their PowerPoint demonstration on the Norfolk Barbastelles - but perhaps less said about that the better? Well actually it went pretty well with Ewan giving us at least 7 out of 10.....

The afternoon was taken up with workshops on subjects ranging from biodiversity and bats in bridges through to time-expansion bat detectors.

Sunday was Colin Catto and the National Bat Monitoring Programme and Steven Betts of The Environment Agency recounted what they hope to do for bats. The final morning session was a research one with themes running through Greater Horseshoe population structure, a New Zealand bat, some Caribbean bats and the shape of echolocation calls. Sunday afternoon was education and development including raising awareness of bats, batty Holidays and making planners work for bats.

There were half-a-dozen sales tables plus about a dozen poster exhibitions and table displays - some very nicely done. Mention was made several times of the current Pipistrelle species split. Apparently we should now refer to these as "Common Pipistrelle" (45 Khz) and "Soprano Pipistrelle" (55Khz) - that of course discounts the 3rd Pipistrelle now in Britain - Nathusius' - which I'm sure will be found widely in the county - once we start listening around the county with time expansion detectors. We now have some recordings of Nathusius' Pipistrelle and have spoken to bat workers with experience of this species - I hope some recording along with some bat box details and other new material will appear on the new Norfolk Bat Group web site before long.

IT'S NOW AT:

<http://www.surf.to/NorfolkBatGroup>

Apparently this species prefers a watery rural environment with older traditional buildings. Does that remind you of anywhere?

(see the new Nathusius Pipistrelle U.K distribution map).

The most riveting and worthwhile part of the weekend was a slight departure from normal. Conference things usually end in a flurry by 5 p.m. on the Sunday afternoon! The Sunday evening this time however, was devoted to a session on time-expansion detectors. We had an hour or so of theory then out into the field in three groups into the likely surrounding areas near water. Our group struck lucky and saw and recorded Noctule, Daubenton and 45 kHz Pipistrelles over the river just outside Ripon. Then it was back to the college to put the recordings into the computer and see their sound profiles using a programme called "Batsound".

It was new to me to see Natterers bats as a vertical line -starting at over 100 kHz and dropping to below our hearing range (20 Khz), while one of the sound files brought by Ewan showed Serotine or Noctule in amongst our barn dwelling Barbastelles! It will take me a time to get used to the idea of recording unheard noises in the dark - then coming home to feed them with wires into a computer - before you know what it was you had not heard or seen! I suppose I belong to the older school of natural history - if you cannot see and hear it in the field and name it - then it may well not exist. I expect that's only a short step from the even older - "what's hit is history, what's missed is mystery....."

John Goldsmith

The distribution of records of *Nathusius pipistrelle* in the British Isles
Symbols with solid boarder indicate that exact geographic location is unknown



A NATURAL HISTORY CROSSWORD FOR CHRISTMAS

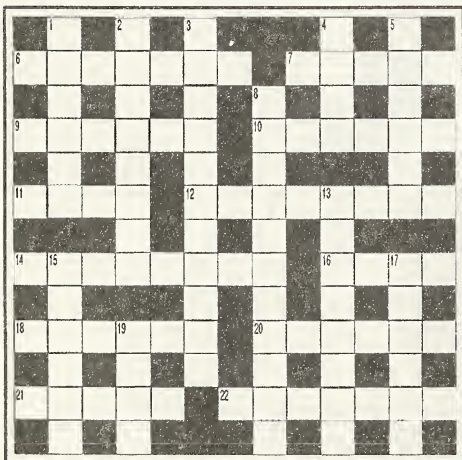
compiled by Malcolm Metcalf

ACROSS

6. Six eyed spider *Dysdera* _____ (7)
7. Young hog (5)
9. Branched horn (6)
10. *Citrus aurantium* (6)
11. Used to frighten away an animal! (4)
12. Aquatic nymph (8)
14. Bay rum is produced from the foliage of this plant (8)
16. Fungus causing (4)
18. Wild sheep of India (6)
20. Desert (6)
21. Cover with dewlike drops (5)
22. Cultivated plant named after Michel Begon (7)

DOWN

1. Natural division of a plant stem (6)
2. Marine bivalve molluscs (8)
3. Sand loving plants (11)
4. Flightless South American bird (4)
5. Coconut tree (6)
8. Red berried garden shrub (11)
13. Another name for Aardvark (5-3)
15. Another name for inchworm (6)
17. Mist or fine rain apparently falling from a cloudless sky (6)
19. Mountain wild goat (4)



*Season's
Greetings*



Malcolm has kindly donated
a book prize for the winner.

*'The Countryside
Remembered'*
by Sadie Ward.

Future Photographs for Bird Report

Two bird photographs taken by members of the Photographic Group have been included in the 1998 *Bird and Mammal Report*.

I am seeking to balance photographs of rarities and common birds in future reports and feel sure that some members have slides suitable for possible inclusion in such issues.

Julian Bhalerao (Tel: 01263 - 821347) will be largely responsible for selection of future photographs. Please telephone him if you have any queries. However, any slides should be posted to me at 49 Nelson Road, Sheringham, NR26 8DA and include both place and month of origin.

Giles Dunmore
Editor



A note to CONTRIBUTORS.

The next *Natterjack* will be in February. It would be much appreciated if any correspondence could be sent to the following address, *as soon as possible*, and marked with NNNS on the envelope. For those with access to a computer a WORD document or an ordinary text file on disc would be most helpful. 'FF'

Francis Farrow
'Heathlands'
6 Havelock Road
Sheringham
Norfolk
NR26 8QD



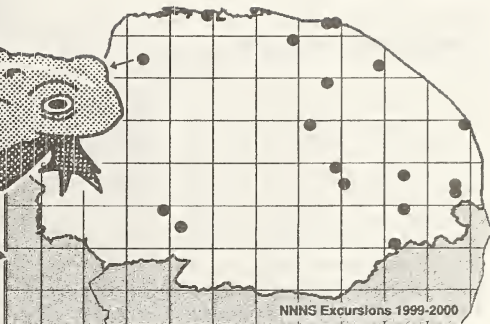
Please send your answers to the Editor of the *Natterjack* by **January 8th 2000**. All correct entries will be placed in a draw and the winner's name together with the answers will be published in the February issue.

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THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK



Toad-in-the-hole....

Another packed edition - my thanks to all contributors. This issue has further calls for your valuable time but I trust some of you can help with the various requests. There is a proposal to go, in part, to an electronic format for the next issue (see below). Finally take a look at the the 20th Century page, particularly the earlier decades - it makes you wonder what the 22nd Century Naturalists will be lamenting or praising for the 21st! At least what is present at the beginning of this century is being well documented through *Wildlife* 2000.

World Wide Web.

The internet is becoming for most of us part of everyday life. The NNNS has a website and this includes a description of the Society, its programme, *Wildlife* 2000 and notes on the Bird & Mammal report. Now selected 'Natterjack' items from the next issue are to be placed. These will be without telephone numbers or addresses unless it is otherwise requested, however, if you would rather your contributions were not considered for the website please mention this when submitting material. 'FF'

FIELD & INDOOR MEETINGS February - April 2000

Please note that start times for the field meetings are variable and that our evening talks are now being held in the **Sports & Leisure Centre at Easton College.**

Tuesday 15th February

'The changing lichen flora of Norfolk'

An illustrated talk by Peter Lambley
7.30 p.m. Room 7, Easton College
Sports & Leisure Centre

An EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING
WILL BE HELD PRIOR TO THE TALK

Sunday 20th February

West Runton 12.00 noon.
TG184432

Meet at the West Runton Beach car park. In the immortal words of Monty Python "and now for something completely different ..."



Thursday 16th March

Lynford Arboretum 11.00 a.m.
Full Day. TL822943
Mainly for spring birds.
Leader: Eunice Phipps.

Tuesday 21st March

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

7.30 p.m. Room 7, Easton College
Sports & Leisure Centre
Hopefully, business will be quickly dispatched and we will be able to enjoy the ensuing illustrated talk and presentation on the *Wildlife* 2000 project by Rex Hancy.

Saturday 8th April

Earlham Park 10.30 a.m. Full Day.
TG193082

An introduction to mosses and liverworts.
Leader: Robin Stevenson.



Tuesday 18th April

'A celebration of the seasons: summer'

7.30 p.m. Room 7, Easton College
Sports & Leisure Centre
This is the annual presentation to the society by the photographic group.

Bob Ellis, Chairman
Programme Committee

The quarterly bulletin
of the
Norfolk & Norwich
Naturalists' Society



Founded 1869
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Number 68
February 2000

THINKING OF COLIN ...

It was billed as "A view of the world through Colin Dack's camera" - and what a world it was. From the 9,700 slides that Colin bequeathed to the Society, Mike Poulton and a team of helpers whittled the hoard down to just over 200 and presented a superb and varied show at Easton College on October 19. We were all left asking why, except under pressure and on the rarest occasions, Colin would never let us see his work. It was of a quality that put most of us would-be nature photographers to shame.

Rex Hancy opened the evening with an evocative and at times hilarious word portrait of the enigmatic and sometimes infuriating Colin and recalled those lengthy, late-evening phone calls that most members who have held office in the Society, and some who haven't, received with great regularity.

Rex's particular contribution was to talk about Colin's gall and spider slides. Ken Durrant took up the story with some of Colin's insect pictures, followed by Reg Evans on fungi and Alec Bull on plants. Mike Poulton rounded off the presentation with a selection of memorable landscapes and skyscapes. In the absence of a rather vital lead, Bob Ellis spent a no doubt tiring evening acting as projectionist.

•The evening had a particular purpose - to acknowledge Colin's battle against dyslexia by raising money for the Waveney Valley Dyslexia Association. The association chairman, Lady Addington, told us that dyslexia was not formally recognised by Norfolk education authority until 1978, and then only after a lot of groundwork by the association.

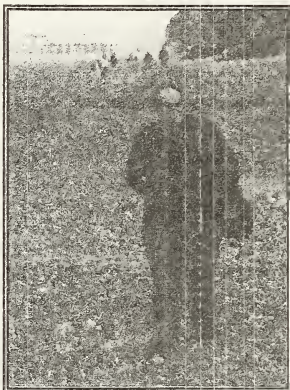


Photo: David Mower

Since then the situation had been a good deal better (far too late for Colin, of course) but provision was still patchy. Members will be delighted to know that the collection at the end of the evening raised £200.45. They will be even more pleased to learn - knowing how Colin, despite his problems, mastered computers - that the money will be spent on computer equipment. I have had this letter from Lady Addington: "I write ... to thank you for a really splendid donation towards our funds ... a really generous sum and one which indicates the true esteem in which your members held your late membership secretary, Colin Dack. "Those of us who came to the meeting on October 19 were fascinated by the slides as well as being most impressed by the obvious expertise of the people giving the commentaries ...

"The WVDA is at the moment trying to raise money to buy computer equipment so that we may offer assessments to members and children of members, and also to show how IT can help overcome some of the problems faced by dyslexic people. The money donated by [your members] will be used for this cause."

David Paull

'FISHING' SPARROWHAWK

Our local Sparrowhawk in giving chase to a young pigeon, missed, but gave it a glancing blow which knocked it into my pond.

The hawk then landed on my birdbath, reviewed the situation; flew up; gained height and then Osprey like, with legs and talons outstretched, tried to retrieve its prey. However, it was nervous of the water and after several abortive attempts gave up, by which time the pigeon had drowned.

Throughout, I gritted my teeth and did not interfere, had it been a rarer bird, I might have reacted differently.

Janet Smith

Have Earth Tongues appeared on your lawn?

When, in the middle of December, I was called to look at the 'ugly black fungi' on a friend's lawn at Edgefield, I expected to find a troop of ageing blackening Waxcaps *Hygrocybe conica* - what I actually found were hundreds of Earth Tongues, pushing their fruit-bodies a few centimetres above the sward.

There are about a dozen species in Britain, most distinguishable only by their microscopic characteristics. The species growing in such uncharacteristic abundance turned out to be *Geoglossum umbratile* but it is not uncommon to find several species on the same lawn; last year I found three on the lawn of the Old Rectory in Holt. Most species are described as occasional, rare or very rare but I suspect that they are often overlooked. This year there were Earth Tongues on all five 'suitable' lawns I visited. If you have a well-established lawn that has been regularly cut and never treated with inorganic fertilizer, you probably have them too, especially if there is plenty of moss. Some years are better than others but next October give your lawn-mower a rest for a few weeks and see what comes up. If the earth sticks its tongues out at you, give me a call.



Tony Leech

Earth Tongue
Geoglossum sp.

LOOK BACK PAGE 1900-1999

(personal highlights of some 20th Century Norfolk Naturalists)

1900-09 (From Transactions Vol: VIII)

A flock of about twenty Pallas's Sand Grouse is said to have been seen in the Broads district on 11th June, 1907. None were killed, but the observers were familiar with the appearance of these birds in 1888.

JH Gurney and T Southwell

1910-19 (From Transactions Vol: IX)

A fine Sturgeon was discovered in the small river Delph, in West Norfolk, on June 16th 1914. Cartridges loaded with buckshot were useless against its well-protected hide, and it was only after a stout tussle with a boat hook and a shot into a more vulnerable region that it was secured. Weight, 31 stone 5 lb. It was sent to London, where it realised £6.

AH Patterson

1920-29 (From Transactions Vol: XII)

A female Oleander Hawk-moth, an exceedingly rare moth, was caught at Hemsby (near Gt. Yarmouth), on September 8th 1926. It was resting on some palings by the roadside and had laid two eggs, which were however infertile.

K Bagnall-Oakeley

1930-39

Thinking back to the 1930s I can recall when as a young lad walking through fields of permanent pastures in North Norfolk and putting up clouds of Meadow Brown butterflies at every step. One swing of the net would capture a dozen or more. On High Kelling heath the Silver-studded Blue butterflies were so common that the small gorse bushes were 'blue' with so many males sitting upon them.

In those days the cattle and horses were grazed on the meadows and not fed the artificial compound foods that they are today, I could also find a few of our largest fly *Asilus crabroniformis* which laid its eggs in the cow pats. These have become extremely rare and have disappeared from our own countryside, come to think of it now so have the permanent pastures.

Ken Durrant

1940-49

March 1947. A bitterly cold spell with thick ice covering all the Broads. In the late afternoon, between Rollesby and Filby Broads, I noted an Otter resting on the ice just a few yards away on the Rollesby side. It was eating a fish. I stopped and watched at close quarters. The Otter took no notice. Then after finishing that particular dish, it re-entered the water through a hole in the ice and swam around for a while before re-emerging with yet another fish which formed, presumably, the second course. It was very cold and I left quietly.

Reg Jones

1950-59

Spring 1952. It was Sunday morning and I was showing a visitor round the Broads. About noon, before returning to base, I called on 'Trickler' Skoyles at Ormesby. He hired out boats which were used by fishermen on Ormesby and Rollesby Broads and had a good knowledge of all that happened in that part of the world. I asked him if he could find me a Bittern's nest for photography. He said he would try. I left for home and was sitting down for lunch at about one o'clock when the 'phone rang. It was 'Trickler' and, yes, he had found one!

Reg Jones

1960-69

While on Beeston Common during the afternoon of October 23rd 1965 I was lucky enough to witness the arrival of many 100's of Waxwings in from the sea. Also during this extraordinary event I saw a juv. Cuckoo, a Ring Ouzel and a Bearded Tit.

Alec Humphrey

1970-79

Was I seeing things or were the stones I was idly throwing into the sea at Salisbury Cove, Maine (June 1977) making green flashes? There were

no lights for the ripples to reflect, not even moonlight so it had to be bioluminescence. I waded in and eventually swam, fascinated by the sight of my luminous arms. I have not been back to Maine but most summers I manage to renew my acquaintance with *Noctiluca scintillans*, the flashing unicell, at Blakeney. I choose a warm moonless night to walk at low-tide by the trickle of water draining out of a creek. When I splash water on to the wet mud it flashes back at me. To wonder why seems almost churlish.

Tony Leech

1980-89

To-day with teams of birders, high-tech communications and advance preparation getting a 100+ birds in a day in Norfolk is commonplace, however, on 11th May, 1980 and confining my birding to North Norfolk between Felbrigg and Cley a total of 102 species observed was a memorable occasion. I consider the top five birds seen that day to be Bittern, Black Tern, Wood Sandpiper, Wood Warbler and Stonechat. It is interesting to note, however, that Tree Sparrow and Corn Bunting were also on the list.

Francis Farrow

1990-99

My favourite day was the emergence of hundreds of 5-spot Burnet Moths (*Zyaena trifolii*) at Breydon Water, Great Yarmouth on the 16th July, 1998.

Colin Jacobs



The Norfolk Damselfly

(Reproduced with permission from *British Wildlife* Vol. 10 No. 6 August 1999)

An important rediscovery this spring [1999] in the Netherlands of a small population of *Coenagrion armatum* (known as the Norfolk Damselfly in Britain) has prompted the question of whether this damselfly might still be found in the Norfolk Broads or similar habitat. The last known records of Norfolk Damselfly were from near Stalham in 1957, but the original locations have long since become polluted and overgrown and thus unsuitable for its survival. As in this country, the damselfly had not been recorded since 1956 in the Netherlands and its rediscovery in the Weerribben at a pond measuring 30m x 40m, adjacent to a dyke, was a surprising find for Marcel Wasscher and the Dutch Dragonfly Society.

Surrounding plants at this locality included young stands of Common Reed *Phragmites australis*, Lesser Bulrush *Typha angustifolia* and some Greater Bladderwort *Utricularia vulgaris*. In all, ten males, two ovipositing pairs and another immature female were observed flying between vegetation low over the water in somewhat windy conditions. It would be worth observers bearing this rediscovery in mind when surveying in the Norfolk Broads next season. Male Norfolk Damselflies can be distinguished from other similar blue damselflies by the absence of thoracic stripes, a square black spot on a light blue ground on segment two, a light blue segment eight and enlarged anal appendages. The females have bifid black marks on a blue or green ground on segment eight and a relatively large amount of blue or green on segment two, unlike females of other blue damselfly species. Flight period is from late May to late July.

Val Perrin

British Dragonfly Society

Galls on Broom

Following my visit to the Lowestoft Field Club informal session, Mr Arthur Copping of Diss, recently gave me two branches from the shrub Broom (*Cytisus*) from Norwich Railway Station that were covered in small Cauliflower shaped galls, about 10mm in diameter, and wondered if I could identify them for him.

Once in my study and with the aid of a hand lens and microscope I was able to identify them as the gall of the Mite *Eriophyes genista*. They appear in early summer on the buds of Broom and these will fail to develop into normal shoots and leaves.

As time goes by the growths appear as these "cauliflower's" which under a hand lens can be seen to be covered in silver hairs. Even further into the summer period they begin to dry into a dark green colour and will stay on the plants for the whole winter season and can reside on them for many years.

I have checked my mother's Broom at Kessingland, just south of Lowestoft, and it is seen to be clear of this gall. Should anybody have these infestations on their own shrubs I would be pleased to see them as I have not found any along the coastal strip. It may be an inland occurrence where it is warmer during the winter and where the mite may be able to survive (see footnote).

The galls cannot be destroyed by any chemical means and they should be picked off by hand only if it is impairing the growth, otherwise they do not seem to do any harm to the plants at all.

Colin A Jacobs

Dendrological Anomaly! (or Unexpected Tree)

Many of you will know the Joe Jordan hide on the Holkham Reserve, raised on stilts, overlooking some of the best winter goose-watching meadows. I have been going there for years, in fact since well before the hide was there. A few weeks ago I noticed, I am ashamed to say for the first time, that one of the trees behind it is a Monterey Pine, *Pinus radiata*.

I had thought that the only examples of this species locally were those which were planted in 1995 near the Beach Car Park in Wells, and others to the east of the board walk at Holkham Bay. This one near the Joe Jordan hide is a mature tree, apparently of the same age as the Corsican Pines around it. It has the typical bare trunk and lopsided spreading canopy of the ones you see in its native habitat in California. I imagine it predates other Monterey Pines here by 50 years.

Why was it planted? Was it a mistake? (I know of another possible mistake, near the "Drinking Pool", where a Scots Pine was put in a row of Corsicans). How easily were these Californian pines acquired a century ago? Is it perhaps the oldest of its species in Norfolk?

How to identify a Monterey Pine: dead easy, they have bright green needles in bunches of three, and large cones shaped like hedgehogs, which hang on to the tree for years. I really have no excuse!

Paul Banham

FOOTNOTE: Following receipt of this letter in October I checked some broom on Sheringham Common and found the gall present (in a sheltered position). Later that day I also checked a list recently received from Reg and Lil Evans (made during the September NNNS excursion to Beeston & Sheringham Commons) and yes there was a record of the gall too!

FF

ARACHNOLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS

So much pleasure have I gained from the study of spiders that I feel it is time I paid tribute to the man who first infected, or was it injected me with enthusiasm for the subject. Like the good teacher he is he helped his pupil with advice, encouragement and above all praise. Like a small boy I searched his face for the signs of pleasure that I knew would appear when he gazed upon a find I believed was rare or a Norfolk first. Thank you Rex Hancy. It is a tribute not cheek when my children run about singing "Hancy wancy spider climbing up the spout!" You have, however, saddled me with an almost impossible task.

Added to the frustration of not finding certain species one wants to find there is the seemingly endless list of species one wants to find!

To illustrate this there are 33 spider families in Britain. I am particularly fond of one of these, the Salticidae or jumping spiders. This family contains 34 British species divided into 15 genera. Ten species are very rare and nine are common. The rest fall between the two, most being local, rare or generally uncommon. In seven years of study I have only found 14 Salticid species. During those years I have searched for the largest of them all and in early July 1997 I found a colony. So, after a long, laborious introduction we finally arrive at the subject of this essay, *Marpissa muscosa*! (see illustration of female).

There is a fence running along the west side of the A1088 between Thetford and Euston (Map ref: TL893799). One hundred yards into Suffolk I found the spider hunting on the fence posts and lying in silken cells within the posts-cracks and splits. Females grow to 11mm which is hefty for a Salticid. It's brown and grey patterns make for perfect camouflage on pine trunks and dead wood. On this visit males were very common with only one female found. I collected one of each sex for study and placed them in a specially designed cage. They ate flies immediately, the female ate two in five hours and appeared quite unconcerned by transport and captivity. They drank from balls of soaked tissue. They leapt on prey over distances of two inches and commenced stalking prey from five inches away. Unusually for sun lovers I found them out and about during the night. The male moulted and became sexually mature on 14 July and although he performed his courtship dance many times, a raising high of the front pair of legs, I never witnessed mating. Sadly he passed on in March 1998. She never laid any eggs and joined him in early August. Was lack of breeding success

due to being in captivity or did she just not fancy him?

I found that in order to walk on the smooth walls of their cage, a Ferrero Rocher container, they covered the surface with thousands of silk spots. At each corner, from where they would

leap to the next wall, was a clear space of 1cm on each side. This spotting clearly illustrated the Salticid use of the silk safety line, stuck down every centimetre or so as they move across surfaces.



I believe *Marpissa muscosa* is locally common in Breckland and I did eventually obtain a Norfolk record a hundred yards on the Norfolk side of the border.

Garth M. Coupland

Desert Island

If you fancy a night or two on Norfolk's own desert island - Scolt Head then this could well happen. English Nature / National Trust have proposed to offer their basic accommodation building on the reserve to the Society in return for some recording of the island's natural history. Details of the invitation and dates etc., will appear in the May issue of 'Natterjack'.

Birds Britannica Request for Help

Birds play a unique role in British society. They are intricately involved with our social, cultural and emotional lives. They help shape our sense of place and season. We write songs, compose poems, tell stories, even hold festivals to celebrate birds.

Now Richard Mabey and Mark Cocker are writing an account of this cultural importance, entitled *Birds Britannica*. It follows the format of Richard Mabey's award-winning *Flora Britannica*, and we now need to enlist public help in mapping the ways birds fit into our everyday lives.

Birds Britannica will cover all those species on the British list, be they resident, migrant or occasional visitors, that have what we might call a cultural profile. Here are some of the more specific themes in which we are interested:

Vernacular and local

names: for instance, long-pod, jack-in-a-bottle, bum barrel (and a score more) for the long-tailed tit; eve jar, spinner and goatsucker for the nightjar. How many in this great lexicon are still used in everyday speech?

Collective names, graphic and affected by turns: a murmuration of starlings; a watch of nightingales; a charm of goldfinches. What is the origin of these often very literary descriptions?

Literary references: English poetry and prose is full of descriptions of native birds, from the medieval 'Owl and Nightingale' to modern celebrations of the rakish swift.

Bird Images: Birds appear in paintings, stained glass windows,

church carvings, often with some kind of symbolic meaning. How has this changed between the Renaissance (when goldfinches and swallows were popular) and the present? They are also represented in pub names and on pub signs, and it would be fascinating to complete a full list, which would include The Firecrest, near Wendover Forest in the Chilterns, and The Mother Redcap, in East London.

Bird songs: They are almost cultural artefacts in their own right, and have been celebrated in poetry and music. Which are the favourites today? Have the homely tones of the song thrush and blackbird supplanted the more romantic and elusive notes of the nightingale and woodlark? Can birdsong be portrayed in words, such as 'little bit of bread and no cheese' for the yellowhammer or 'wet my lips' for the quail?

The scapegoating of birds: there is a modern list of villains, headed by the magpie and sparrowhawk, both accused of decimating garden bird populations. How does the mythology compare with evidence from the field? Which other birds - for example, the hen harrier and ruddy duck - are popularly demonised?

Having gathered your thoughts and memories (and also those of any relatives!), please write, with any clippings, pictures or letters, to BIRDS BRITANNICA, c/o Random House, 20 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London SW1V 2SA. If you want further information email Mark Cocker at:

markcocker@btinternet.com, or ring 01603 611797. Any material used will be fully credited in the finished book.

Churchyards & road verges

Over the past few years, volunteers, often members of NNNs, have been carrying out valuable survey work for two schemes overseen by the Norfolk Wildlife Trust.

The Churchyard Conservation Scheme has supplied management advice to over 300 churches across the county. Research suggests that some species, such as ox-eye daisy, meadow saxifrage and cowslip now rely on churchyards as their strongholds.

The Roadside Nature Reserves scheme, run as a partnership with Norfolk County Council, uses survey data to determine sites suitable for designation as roadside nature reserves. Suitable sites are marked with posts and the contractors responsible for cutting the verge advised on appropriate management. As well as the classic meadow species, road verges can also turn up rarities such as Dutch rush and purple broomrape.

In order to continue this important work, however, we do need more volunteer surveyors. There are several ways in which you could help:

- Join a team looking at verges or churchyards. We meet twice a year to discuss results and choose sites to survey.
- If you can't make the meetings, then please get in touch, we can talk about places to survey near your home.
- Please let me know if you are already surveying a road verge or churchyard.

Surveying need not be a massive commitment; just one site would be a great help, especially if you could visit it over several years. Although we cannot offer any remuneration for expenses, we can let you have blank survey forms and hope to offer a training day for surveyors in May.

Helen Baczkowska
Biodiversity Project Officer
Norfolk Wildlife Trust
01603 62445 / helen@nwt.cix.co.uk

HONOURING ALEC

Every two years, the Society and the Norfolk Wildlife Trust jointly honour someone who has made a distinguished contribution to natural history in the county by awarding the Sydney Long Memorial Medal, which commemorates the Society's former long-serving secretary who founded the Wildlife Trust.

This year's recipient was the Society's current joint president, Alec Bull, who received the medal from the Trust's president, Sir John Blofeld, at the Trust's annual meeting on October 15.

The citation says: "Alec Bull understood the importance of systematic recording before its value was generally appreciated and his documented monitoring of the birds of an arable habitat at Cranworth, near Dereham, for over thirty years is a remarkable and much quoted piece of work. He was West Norfolk regional representative for the British Trust for Ornithology from 1968-82, and was the vice-county organiser for the first Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland.

"As a quite extraordinarily knowledgeable field botanist, he developed national eminence in the taxonomy of brambles (*Rubus* spp) and published an account of the Norfolk species. Alec was plant recorder for East Norfolk for the Botanical Society of the British Isles from 1984-89, and prime mover in the project to record and map Norfolk's flora. Publication of the new Flora of Norfolk in 1999 with Alec as co-editor, will provide an essential conservation tool for the future.

"Alec was President of the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society in 1974-75 and currently shares the office of President of the Society with his co-editor Gillian Beckett. He served as Secretary of the Society from 1987-92. All who know Alec speak of his great modesty; a self-made and highly competent naturalist whose like we may not see again.

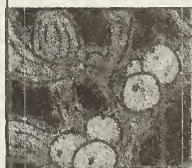
"Accordingly, the Councils of the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society and Norfolk Wildlife Trust have agreed that Alec Bull should receive the Sydney Long Memorial Medal for 1999."

David Paull

Grow Your Own

For several years now I have, on and off, made attempts to grow mistletoe on our apple tree. I have followed 'secret methods' given me by old countrymen, I have used common sense and tried to imitate Nature, but all to no avail.

So I was pleased to read Grace Come's article on this subject in the EDP. She too had no success until visiting a certain Mr. Fairhead. Mistletoe grew like weeds on his trees, even a clump on an old wooden box. The recipe is this: choose a young, smooth section of apple tree branch, rub it hard with your thumb until it shines, then squash a berry on, making sure it is well stuck. It is best done in February, on the east side of the tree. I shall give it a go!



Tony Howes

Caddis Flies

Until recently I have never been enthralled by adult caddis flies. The larvae have long held my interest since I discover these in freshwaters and there is a real challenge to identify them from their various larval stages. Adult flies, since they vacate the water, had also vacated my interest!!

This Autumn Derek Howlet, David Nobbs and I have started to collect the autumnal and winter moths of Wheatfen Broad. I found myself surprised to find species of caddis in the traps and this has set me off on a voyage of discovery. Ernest Daniels studied caddis flies in and around Norwich since the 1930s and many years ago he kindly gave me a list of records from Claude Morley for the late 1930s. Ernest published his work in the *Transactions* and other than the occasional note the group has been neglected in our literature.

The time has come for me to learn about the adult flies but where to start? I have a copy of the Freshwater Biological Association key by MacAn but frankly I could not follow it. Ken Durrant has become my tutor. Visits to Sheringham have enlightened me on the techniques of setting the insects and guided me through the early stages of identification. I have purchased a copy of the 1938 book on Caddis by Martin Mosely and this has been invaluable in identification. Ken has supplied drawings to illustrate key features and of course he has his magnificent collections of insects to refer to.

Continued on p8.

Caddis flies cont.

I always start on an unfamiliar group by constructing my own keys using drawings etc., cut and pasted from different works. I find that this gives me a feel for a group and focuses my attention onto critical features. I am developing my keys this winter and the plan is to start a serious study in the spring-summer. I shall of course be very reliant on Ken Durrant. He is a teacher of the highest quality.

The list below is of the records for Wheatfen Broad for the 20th C., and reflects the studies of Ted Ellis, Ernest Daniels, Ken Durrant and my recent finds.

Agapetus fascipes Curtis
Agraynia pagentia Curtis
 Great Red Sedge -
Phryganea grandis L.
Phryganea obsoleta Mclach.
Trichostegia minor (Curtis)
Hydroptila sparsa Curtis
Agraylea multipunctata Curtis
Anabolia nervosa (Curtis)

Mottled Sedge -
Glyptotaelius pellucidus (Retzius)
Grammotaulis atomarius Fab.
Grammotaulis nitidus (Mueller) RDB1
Limnephilus auricula Curtis
Limnephilus extricatus Mclach.
Limnephilus flavicornis Fab.
Limnephilus griseus (L.)
Limnephilus hirsutus Curtis
Limnephilus incisus Pict.
 (= *Colotaulius incisus* Curt.)
 Cinnamon Sedge -
Limnephilus lunatus Curtis
Limnephilus sparsus Curtis
 Black Silverhorns -
Anthrissodes aterrimus (Stephens)
 Longhorn Sedge -
Oecetis ochracea Curtis
 Grouse Wing -
Myastacides longicornis L.
Plectrocnemia conspersa Curtis
Polycentropus sp. possibly
flavomaculata Pict.
Rhyacophila dorsalis Curtis

Roy Baker



ANSWERS TO THE NATURAL HISTORY CROSSWORD FOR CHRISTMAS

compiled by Malcolm Metcalf



Please note:

No completed crosswords were received by the due date so there is no winner to announce. I hope, however, that many of you had some fun in trying to complete the crossword and on your behalf I would like to thank Malcolm for setting the puzzle.

FF

Photographic Group

Monday February 21st

Ivan West will be showing us his 'African Safari' slides. Coming as it does in the middle of our winter this should be very uplifting - hot, sunny plains, exotic birds and animals. Come along and see how Ivan copes with his subjects. Everybody welcome. Room 4, Easton College, 7.30 pm.

Monday March 27th

An interesting evening is promised when Joy & Mike Hancock will be showing us how to manipulate our photographs with modern technology - a technique of the future. Everybody welcome. Room 4, Easton College, 7.30 pm.

Tuesday April 18th

This brings us round to the 'Photographic Group Lecture'. This is always well received and gives photographers in the society a chance to entertain with their latest work. The theme this year is 'A Celebration of the Seasons - Summer'. Room 7, Easton College, 7.30 pm.

Tony Howes

Tel: 01603 436867

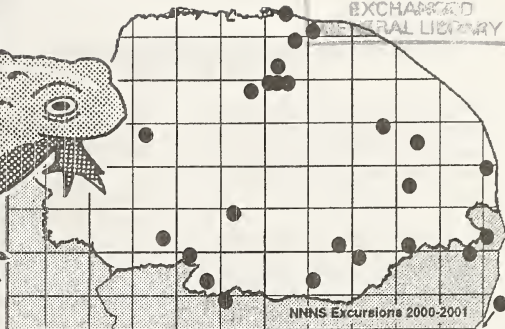
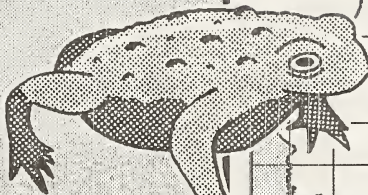
A note to CONTRIBUTORS.

The next *Natterjack* will be in May. It would be much appreciated if any correspondence could be sent to the following address, as soon as possible by April 1st, and marked with NNNS on the envelope. For those with access to a computer a WORD document or an ordinary text file on disc would be most helpful, or you can send an e-mail to: francis.f@virgin.net 'FF'

Francis Farrow
 'Heathlands'
 6 Havelock Road
 Sheringham
 Norfolk
 NR26 8QD



THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK



NNNS Excursions 2000-2001

IF YOU GO DOWN IN THE WOODS.....

A naturalist photographing fungi in King's Forest near the Anglo-Saxon village at West Stow was robbed of £7,000-worth of camera equipment, the Eastern Daily Press reported recently. Two men threatened to beat up the man and put him in hospital unless he handed over the equipment. He did so without a struggle and the robbers made off in a red car.

So, should we be concerned that something like this could happen to us when we are out in the field with cameras and other optical equipment? Who better to ask than Garth Coupland, a Norfolk Police wildlife liaison officer and for the past three years a member of the Society's Council..

Garth says that such incidents are very rare in rural areas but there are sensible precautions you can take when you are about to set out with a collection of valuable gear. Be vigilant. Look around to see if there is anyone who might be watching you. The two robbers at West Stow will almost certainly have watched their victim unload his car and head for the woods. If there is anyone about who could be taking too close an interest in you, go

away. Don't take chances. And if you do have the misfortune to be confronted by robbers do as the West Stow victim did: hand over your equipment without putting up a fight. Cameras can be replaced. Resist and you might suffer serious injury - or worse.

But Garth says that much the greater concern for the police - and the victims - is the thieves who prey on cars left at nature reserves and beauty spots. Everyone is advised to put everything out of sight when they leave their car - but the thieves are one jump ahead. They wait and watch the unsuspecting visitor "hide" their valuables in the boot of the car, then break into it as soon as the owner leaves. In many instances, they break into cars anyway in the hope of finding something of value. Hiding property from the thieves is a waste of time. They can break into your car in less than a minute.

Garth offers some sound advice. On your outings, take with you only what you are going to need - and take it with you when you leave your car. If you are taking binoculars, leave the empty case open on the dashboard or the seat. An empty camera case or bag might also persuade thieves that nothing worth stealing has been left in the car. Make sure your equipment is fully insured. Check that your insurance covers your property when you take it

away from home and especially on trips abroad.

Is it worth security-marking your cameras and other gear? Yes, but the most satisfactory methods are the most drastic. If it is equipment that you are not going to want to sell on at a later stage, Garth suggests making it unsaleable by slapping some paint on it - a tactic recommended to schools for their computer equipment. What about marker pens whose "ink" is supposedly readable only under ultra-violet light? It doesn't stop the equipment being stolen. And the "ink" can be seen in ordinary light if the angle is right - and it can be cleaned off. But it is better than nothing because stolen property recovered by the police is always scanned in the hope of tracing the owner.

More satisfactory and of greater help to the police in tracing owners, but again something you might be reluctant to do if you hope to sell the equipment, is marking it permanently by scratching on an identity - postcode and house number, not your name.

It is a tragedy that we should even have to think about these things but this kind of crime is rife and we should do everything we can not to make it easy for the thieves.

David Paull

The quarterly bulletin
of the
Norfolk & Norwich
Naturalists' Society



Founded 1869
Registered Charity No. 291604

Number 69
May 2000

Police appeal for witnesses

May I take a few minutes of your time to introduce to you, or to remind you of the existence within the police force of the Wildlife Liaison Officers (WLOs).

Norfolk Constabulary has about twenty officers scattered throughout the county. Our responsibility for wildlife matters is voluntary and additional to our normal police duties.

We rely on people like the NNNS members who are regularly "out in the field" to act as extra eyes and ears in the never ending battle against wildlife crime, sadly a growing problem. You are all potential witnesses if you come upon an offence, be it wildlife crime or otherwise.

The types of offences you may come across are many. Illegal traps or unchecked legal traps and snares with rotting corpses. Killing, injuring, interference with or disturbance of rare or protected animals such as Badgers, Bats, Great Crested Newts, birds and their nests and eggs. Plant theft including the digging up Bluebells and Snowdrops or the raking for Water Soldiers or lilies. Poisoning offences, often found as pegged out rabbit or poisoned eggs with dead wildlife nearby. **(Do not touch ANYTHING in these circumstances. Some poisoning can kill through inhalation or skin absorption).** Poaching, illegal specimen collecting, smuggling and illegal sale of protected species or their parts. Illegal habitat destruction, damage to nature reserves by "off-road" vehicles or trials bikes. The illegal release of certain species (including Barn Owls) into the wild.

Often people are suspicious of something they see but are not sure why. This results in a failure to report or late reporting of an incident. **IF YOU ARE SUSPICIOUS THEN IT MUST BE SUSPICIOUS!**

The police do not mind attending a "false alarm with good intent". What often appears to be an offence can turn out to be lawful (whether we agree with the law or not is another matter!). We would rather check it out than risk losing the chance to prosecute an offender.

As potential witnesses I must stress that you should never, ever put yourselves in danger. That is what we are paid for! What we do need is good evidence gathering and early reporting of incidents.

PLEASE always carry a notebook and pencil, write down what you observe accurately and retain it. Your notes could be vital evidence at a future trial. Record vehicle number plates, vehicle types and colours and any vehicle peculiarities. Record descriptions and numbers of suspects and what they are doing. Photograph incidents if it is safe to do so. If you have a mobile phone use it immediately and if a suspected offence is ongoing or suspects have just left the scene use the 999 system. Otherwise contact the police as soon as possible.

If you wish to report or discuss a non-urgent wildlife matter you can contact the police switchboard on 01603 768769 and request a WLO to visit or make contact with you. Or give me a ring - work extension 3126 / home 01493 750095. Thankyou.

Garth M Coupland
PC 215 Acle Police Station



The shrews that thought they were mice (and paid the price)

To find a pygmy shrew, Britain's smallest mammal, is a delight; to find one in your attic is strange; to find one in a cheese-baited mousetrap is bizarre but for this to have happened twice in the same village is remarkable. When, in January, Julia Peaver caught a shrew on the top floor of her house in Edgefield she took it to neighbour Ian Keymer who identified it as a pygmy shrew by its small size and a tail longer than two-thirds of its body length. It was Julia's mother, Angela Turner, who recalled reading in the 1998 Bird & Mammal Report (p. 314) that two had been reported from mouse-traps in a loft by AB/RB, Ann and Richard Brooks, who also live in Edgefield!

Tony Leech

Hibernation or what?

A pristine Red Admiral was observed in my Father-in-law's garden at Costessey on March 25th - a case of hibernation over a mild winter or an early migrant?

David Mower

Galls on Broom

I was interested to read Colin A. Jacobs' contribution, *Galls on Broom*, in the February 2000 issue. However, the galls were collected on Diss station and not Norwich as stated.

A small bed has been planted with ornamental shrubs on the 'down' platform at Diss. Two of these were broom, about 10 yards apart. One bush was heavily infested with the galls, the other, curiously, completely free of them.



Arthur Copping

A NEST ON THE WALL

March 29th

A hen Blackbird has been steadily building a nest on my garage wall, tucked well into a *Pyracantha* bush growing there. I found the first few bits of material sticking out over a week ago. Since then she has made a beautifully crafted goblet of fine roots and dead grasses. I watch her from the greenhouse when I am working there, but mostly I can observe her activities from the dining room window which overlooks the garden.

The cock bird is a typical foreman, he sits about on any high vantage point keeping an eye on things. He is still a young bird, no golden circle round the eye yet, but he does his job in keeping others of the species off his patch. He tends to be in full voice in the early morning, the lovely, melodious song ringing round the garden. What would an English spring be without this songster.

I look forward to the continuation of this saga, they almost seem like family.

Tony Howes

Blow me down!

High winds normally cause minor branch falls around the village but at the end of 1999 a blow felled a lone Scol's Pine tree that stood in the corner of a field on the village edge.

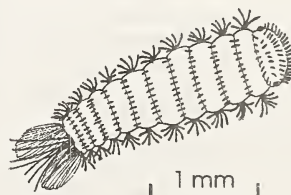
Since pines are not naturally found in our stiff clay soil I stopped to take a closer look at this fallen tree. A contributory cause of its downfall could clearly be seen as the rich reddish-orange of the wood and horizontal cracks in the centre of the trunk indicated that extensive dry rot had reduced the flexibility of the trunk. The bark and outer white wood had twisted and split. Beneath several pieces of loose bark there were shiny shed skins of some small creature. As I prised these off the tree dozens of tiny 1-2mm long hairy creatures scuttled away.

Their general shape, chestnut colour, short hairs down each side and a tuft on the end of the tail reminded me of 'woolly bears' - larvae of beetles that feed on dried animal and plant remains. As usual my pockets contained an assortment of containers and I collected several to breed through to adulthood for subsequent identification.

Some days later I was clearing a partly obstructed footpath and after I had solved that problem I wandered further along to check some bridges. Halfway along the path was a lone stunted oak tree with some patches of dead bark which of course I had to leave off. Under the bark were some more of the creatures and some moth pupae which I collected to identify.

When I came to look at the moth pupae under the

microscope and draw them I saw one of the creatures on its back waving its legs in the air but it had 'legs' along the whole length of its body not just the three pairs beetles have. "Cor! Look at this!" I said to my daughter who was doing her homework at the adjacent desk in the study. "It looks like a woolly woodlouse or millipede", she replied as she leant on my shoulder and peered down the microscope. "That's it", I thought as I pushed the chair back almost knocking her over as I rushed to the bookcase on the other side of the room. There in my newly acquired Key to Millipedes was, - first in the book, the "Bristly Millipede" *Polyxenus lagurus*.



Its small size and distinct silvery brush of hairs on the tail and black tufts down the side makes it easily identified if somewhat difficult to find. The map in the book shows that it was widely distributed over the British Isles but absent from certain counties including Norfolk. This distribution pattern is probably due more to the lack of Millipede experts than the creatures themselves, so I was not surprised to find Norfolk's own millipede expert had found it in several places throughout the county since the book had been published.

Robert Maidstone

West Runton Beach

20th February 2000

When I was asked to lead an excursion to Runton Beach as a winter fixture, I had some reservations, but it turned out to be a better day than some I have had in the height of Summer! A score of members and families ventured on to the uncomfortable walking occasioned by the slippery chalk, flints and seaweed, and managed to find a good variety of the plant and animal life of this unique beach - Norfolk's special version of the rocky shore.

Flat Wrack at the highest level quickly gave way to Bladder Wrack, which in turn was gradually replaced by Serrated Wrack as we went down the gentle slope (about 2.5m vertically over some 200m horizontally) towards the sea. Red seaweeds were represented by Laver *Porphyria umbilicalis* (not enthusiastically recommended by Roy Baker, though Welsh!) and by Coral Wrack, with a couple of Carrageens, *Gigartina* and *Chondrus*, further down. New to some present was the encrusting red seaweed *Lithothamnion*, looking rather like a pinky-purple lichen. Green seaweeds included Sea Lettuce and *Cladophora*.

The animal life, after a rather slow start with little more than Common Periwinkles at the top end of the beach, became much more varied further down. The larger flints were encrusted with the Antipodean barnacle *Elminius modestus* (presumed to have come into European waters on ships' hulls) and serpulid tube-worms. Dog-whelks (some bright yellow) and mainly very small



Beadlet Anemones appeared when we were half-way down the beach. Two fish caught proved to be Shannies (a type of Blenny), and a fresh-looking "empty" Painted Top-shell in fact contained a small Hermit Crab. Small, sometimes very small, Edible Crabs were quite abundant at the lowest levels, and here Francis Farrow managed to find two of the Runton specialities, a Squat Lobster *Galathea squamifera* and an immature Spider-crab, which camouflages itself by "planting" seaweeds on its carapace. An unwelcome addition to the Runton fauna was a few live Slipper Limpets *Crepidula fornicata*, an alien pest of oyster beds; I have previously only seen dead shells washed up.

Paul Banham

Scolt Head Island

The Society has booked the "hut" on Scolt Head Island for the week 10th - 17th June for interested members to visit and record some of the wildlife found on the site. A charge will be made, but the amount will depend on how many people wish to use the hut.

The hut sleeps five (beds, mattresses, pillows provided but not bedding) and gas cooking facilities, but you need to take your own food and matches. The Reserve Warden has offered to ferry members on and off the island at high tide on any day if you wish to stay for only a day or two.



Any member who is interested in staying a night or two (or seven!) and finding out what is there, or experts who cannot come but who would like particular species collected, should contact:

Robert Maldstone on
01508 531287 by June 1st.

Magnification Magic - NNS Hand Lens Offer

Birdwatchers need binoculars, mycologists need microscopes but all naturalists need a hand lens. A simple x8 or x10 lens transports its user into an otherwise unseen world where pollen grains can be seen, fleas look fascinating and even moulds can appear beautiful. Three tips will ensure success:

- Hold the lens as close to your eye as possible.
- Make sure the specimen is well illuminated.
- Keep the lens on a cord round your neck; it will be easier to use and less easy to lose.



Now, through the goodwill of *Anglian Lepidopterist Supplies*, the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society can offer good quality 12 mm diameter x10 Ruper lenses for £7.50 each including p & p. Order from Tony Leech (3, Eccles Road, Holt, Norfolk NR25 6HJ. Tel: 01263 712282), to whom cheques should be made payable, and remember that buying a young naturalist a good lens is an excellent way of encouraging interest.

Tony Leech

Regular Visitor

Last winter a pied wagtail was seen on the lawn when the bird food went out, it seemed to prefer the shredded suet more than the seeds. This was the third winter that this individual had shown up here. How do we know? - because it has a deformed right foot, almost like a little club, but it can walk ok, just a bit ungainly.

It looked out of place somehow mixing in with wood pigeons, doves, blackbirds and the like, but it could hold its own. Such tiny little things must get very cold indeed when sleeping in the severe frosts that were prevalent last December.

Tony Howes

How the Crossbill got its...

Tony Howes' account of the collision of a Pied Flycatcher with his lounge window (*Natterjack*, Nov 1999) reminds me of an experience with a less happy outcome. A group of us were standing outside the Biology Department at Gresham's School, Holt when there was a bang above and a small brown bird fell dead at our feet. The pupil who picked it up pointed out that the impact had twisted the bird's bill; his friend, a very competent bird-watcher, correctly identified it as a female Crossbill.

Tony Leech



Crossbill (? 1st Winter f.) killed after hitting a window, September 8th. 1990.

Whooper Swan — 6S53

I saw a party of 34 Whooper Swans feeding and preening on a ploughed field near Potter Heigham on 19th January 2000. On closer inspection one was seen to be wearing a blue neck-collar. A telescope search enabled me to read this as '6S53'.

The bird, a female, was ringed and given the collar as a cygnet near Ylojavi, Finland on 26th August 1996. It was one of a brood of five ringed at the same time. It was recorded in the same general area on five other occasions that autumn; the last being on 1st December 1996.

One week later, on 20th December 1996 it was seen at Catfield, Norfolk and remained in the Catfield, Ludham area (where it was reported 36 times), usually with three of its siblings, until 28th February 1997. On 10th March 1997 it was reported from near Norköping, Götland in southern Sweden and on the following day it was seen back in its natal area of Finland. It was reported from that area on a number of occasions until 29th April 1997 and again from 27th October to 13th November 1997.

The next sighting was from Catfield on 27th January 1998 where it remained until 13th February 1998. On its return journey to Finland it stayed briefly in the island of Åland on 3rd & 4th April 1998, being seen back in the Hameenkyro breeding area by 20th April 1998 and 50 miles further north a few days later. It had returned south again

by 25th April when it was one of a flock of 178 birds. It was last reported that autumn in Finland on 16th November 1998.

On Christmas Eve 1998 it was back on sugar beet fields at Sutton Hall and was seen there, at West Lessingham and Catfield on many occasions until 17th January 1999. It was next seen in southern Sweden on 27th March 1999, its last recorded sighting until my record from Potter Heigham on 19th January 2000.

Don Dorling

Fantastic Fulmars

A trip to Northumberland last year gave me the opportunity to watch Fulmars that were nesting on the rock ledges not far from our cottage. It was awesome to see these truly oceanic birds gliding along a sheer rock face in a strong wind. The bullet shaped body with stiffly held wings seems to punch through the swirling air with easy grace and great speed. They would hurtle along the cliff with just an occasional up and down movement of the rigidly held wings, a slight rolling motion as the tail and wings were tilted to steer its course along the rock face was evident. The Kittewakes that shared the ledges with them were slow and ungainly by comparison.

As these Fulmars made each pass, often very close and at my level, I could see their black eyes looking at me as if to say 'What did you think of that then?' I have been to airshows and seen modern jet fighters going through their paces, but to watch a Fulmar Petrel cruising the cliff face in a stiff breeze must be the ultimate - Poetry in Motion.

Tony Howes

One of a few - Fred Ashton - Remembered

Natterjack No. 68 included notes from a few long-standing members of happenings during the last century which were personal highlights. For the most part they were simple observations of events which were unlikely to be repeated at the present time.

Natterjack also included an appreciation of Colin Dack who laboured behind the scenes for many years on behalf of the Society. He was a character, one of a few who have 'lightened our darkness' on many occasions and are remembered with affection. They should not be forgotten.

Some of us will smile at the mention of Fred Ashton, a regular attendee at our meetings and outings in the post-war years. In his youth, Fred was said to have worked in the taxidermist business established by Thomas Gunn in St Giles, Norwich. It flourished in the early part of the century when the shooting and preservation of birds were socially acceptable. Gunn died in 1923 and although the business continued until a few years after the war it finally closed.

At this time Fred was living in a bungalow in Larkman Lane accompanied by his mother. From this base he carried out a certain amount of taxidermy and when paying him a visit one always had to be ready for a surprise. Fred only used the back door, so entry had to be made via the back garden. On one occasion I was greeted by a fox, an adult and very much alive. It was tethered by means of a collar and chain to a stake and its 'earth' was a large hole in the ground beneath a fence. Needless to say, internally, the nature of Fred's latest taxidermal enterprise tended to dominate the scene.

As a result of his experience in taxidermy, Fred was quite

knowledgeable about some aspects of natural history but he was capable of making a statement which left one without a rational reply and what he regarded as normal would raise eyebrows elsewhere.

Apart from taxidermy, Fred had a small parcel of land in Costessey where he kept a few chickens and pigs. To help feed his stock, stale food was collected from various outlets in the city, a trade bicycle being used for transport. The most striking feature of this cycle was a large open wooden scoop at the front. It resembled, in shape, that seen on a modern mechanical digger, and it accommodated all Fred's collections. In addition he had a motorised version. I think it was a tricycle and it was used for longer excursions. It sported an even larger scoop and the versatility of this unit was demonstrated to me, vividly, in the early 1950's. It was a late afternoon in February. It was very cold with a keen frost. I had been photographing the pre-nesting display of herons at Wickhampton and, around sunset, I was returning to Norwich along the old Yarmouth road. Nearing Postwick, I noticed in the distance a figure on a cycle, in silhouette against a fiery sky. On closer approach I realised it was Fred. Pulling out into the middle of the road to pass, I glanced across at the scoop. It contained a figure swathed in furs. It was Fred's mother!

I said that what Fred regarded as normal would raise eyebrows elsewhere. But he was a lovely man whose company we all enjoyed.

Reg Jones



MUSEUM UPDATE

Norwich Castle is now closed and empty of collections, although most of the displays remain, protected from the building work by timber cladding. It opens again in the spring of 2001. The proposed changes to the museums service 'natural history department' took place from April 1st. You will now find Tony Irwin and Rob Driscoll working at the Shirehall - still with the same phone numbers, this is the new "Natural History Curatorial Section".

The newly formed "Environment Section", which operates under "Archaeology & Environment" is now to be found in the East Wing of the Gressenhall Rural Life Museum - just a little way north of Dereham, telephone: 01362 860528. So far this consists of me, although the 4th post has been transferred there as well, and should be filled soon.

I don't think it is any secret that this has been a VERY difficult time for us all, and now the task in hand is to re-organise ourselves and unpack hundreds of books, boxes and specimens. We never want to see another piece of bubble-wrap ever again! We shall try to keep everyone informed of our progress, and will be able to make the collections available for study again before long. I shall be making appointments to see as many Norfolk naturalists as possible during the next few months to elicit your detailed comments on the proposed re-establishment of the Norfolk Biological Records Centre, which I sincerely hope will propel us all forward, and networking together in the 21st century. THANKS for your patience and understanding.

John Goldsmith

FIELD & INDOOR MEETINGS May - July 2000

Please note that start times are variable and that two of the meetings this quarter can only take limited numbers so that booking is essential.

■ Rubber boots recommended.

■■ Rubber boots essential.

Saturday 6th May Fulmeston Severals and Hindolveston Wood.

10.00 a.m. Full Day. ■

Directions : Turn north from the A1067 at Guist onto the B1110 towards Holt. After about 4 km. turn right into the farm road just before Severals Grange. TG008288.

We are most grateful to the landowner for the opportunity to visit these private woods and it will be interesting to compare them to nearby Swanton Novers wood that we are to visit the following week. The Severals has some very fine exotic trees. The afternoon meeting point is at TG039285.

Leader: Gillian Beckett.

Saturday 13th May Swanton Novers Great Wood.

11.00 a.m. Full Day. ■■

Directions: Turn north from the A1067 at Guist onto the B1110 towards Holt. After about 7 km. bear left into Swanton Novers village. Meet near the telephone box which is on the left, about 100 m. before the crossroads. TG020322.

The wood is a National Nature Reserve with a wide variety of habitats and it is well known for the colony of May Lily. Palmate newts have recently been discovered and there is always the chance of wood warblers passing through at this time of year. We have been asked to restrict the party to 20 persons so please book with Bob Ellis on 01603 662260.

Leader: Robert Baker

Sunday 4th June Thetford Water Meadows.

11.00 a.m. Full Day. ■

Directions: Meet in the Quicksave car park, Thetford. TL866832.

This site is under-recorded so hopefully we will be able to add to its species list. In the afternoon, we will probably go on the Horse Meadows or another site nearby.

Leader: Nick Gibbons.

Sunday 11th June Shelfanger Town Meadows.

11.00 a.m. Full Day. ■

Directions: The meeting point is about 3.5 km. north of Diss on the B1077 (towards Shelfanger and Winfarthing) on the east side of the road opposite Hall Lane. TM107833.

If time permits, we will go on to Boyland Common in the afternoon.

Leader: Arthur Copping.

Sunday 18th June Ebb & Flow Marshes.

11.00 a.m. Full Day. ■

Directions: Meet at Ranworth Staithe. TG359146.

This site was acquired by the Wildlife Trust in 1997 and is part of the Bure Marshes SSSI. Access is best achieved by boat. With mixed habitat of reedbed, sedgebed and carr, there are a number of the scarcer broadland plants here and many of the insects so special to the area. The party is limited to 24 persons so please book with Eunice Phipps on 01953 605273.

Leader: George Taylor.

Wednesday 21st June Spout Hills, Holt.

7.30 p.m. Evening only. ■■

Directions: Leave Holt on the A148 towards Fakenham. Meet in the long lay-by on the south side of the road about 300 m. past the church. TG073388.

This is an intriguing site with several artesian springs, some towards the top of the hills. A surprisingly wide range of species are present and there is a disused railway line adjacent which is also of interest.

Leader: Raz Woollacott.

Sunday 25th June East Walton Common

11.00 a.m. Full Day. ■

Directions: Turn north from the A47 just west of Narborough onto the B1153 towards Gayton. Bear left at East Walton towards East Winch then turn immediately left onto the lane to the common. TF739166.

The common is a SSSI and is well known for its pingoes and chalk grassland.

Leader: Peter Lambley.

Sunday 9th July Wheatfen Natural History Day

Please see the separate panel.

Sunday 23rd July Wacton Parish

11.00 a.m. Full Day

Directions: Turn west off the A140 at Long Stratton towards Wacton. Meet in the villagehall car park which is about 100m past the chapel on the south side of the road. TG179915.

Robert has booked the village hall for our use and there will be microscopes, books and keys available, so towards the end of the day we will be able to spend some time in detailed identification work.

Leader: Robert Maidstone.

Saturday 29th July

Foxley Wood

8.00 a.m. Morning. ■

Directions: Meet at the NWT car park. TG049229

Jon will be putting several moth traps out over night so we will be able to check them in the morning, hence the early start.
Leader: Jon Clifton.

I apologise to all concerned for the rather cursory notes in the last issue of *Natterjack*. Due to a technical hitch, the editor received a draft version rather than the intended final copy.

Bob Ellis, Chairman
Programme Committee

WHEATFEN Natural History Day 9th July 2000

The Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society and the Ted Ellis Trust are jointly hosting a Natural History Day on Sunday 9th July 2000 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Wheatfen Nature Reserve, Surlingham. Several local specialists have been invited to give demonstrations and guided walks to encourage interest in many aspects of natural history. It is hoped that by holding a number of guided walks with small parties concentrating on particular groups of species, participants will be able to learn more than they would in a large party of general interest.

There will be no admission charge but donations to the reserve will be welcomed as usual and tea and cakes will be on sale. Many of the walks will be repeated morning and afternoon so if you are there for the whole day, it will be possible to take advantage of several walks, or if you can only come for part of the day you should still be able to participate in those that are of interest to you. If you wish to bring a picnic lunch, there will be tables etc. available.

As well as guided walks with hints and tips on identification, it will be possible to talk to local naturalists, to see what books are available and which are recommended and to see what sort of equipment is useful. Beginners will be particularly welcome.

RELATED CONGRATULATIONS

Ernest Daniels, who is our longest serving member having joined in 1928, celebrated sixty years of marriage to Bessie earlier this year. Reg and Lil Evans enjoyed a similar celebration last year.

We extend belated congratulations to both couples on achieving their Diamond Weddings with our Best Wishes for many more years of happiness together.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

Members who pay by cheque are reminded that subscriptions fell due on 1 April, 2000. Current rates are £12 for ordinary and family members.

Members who paid by bankers order at the old rate of £10 should send the balance of £2 to the treasurer at the address below. A revised bankers order form will be sent to you.

DI Richmond,
42, Richmond Rise,
Reepham, Norfolk NR10 4LS.

HOLT LOWES WILDLIFE GROUP

Newly-formed, this informal grouping aims to document the flora and fauna of Holt Lowes SSSI, and the on-going effects of conservation management.

The first newsletter should be available by early May, and will include checklists of vascular plants, dragonflies and moths.

Copies are available for £5 (including postage & packing; cheques payable to 'Gresham's School Natural History Society') from:

Tony Leech,
Gresham's School
Natural History Society,
Gresham's School,
Cromer Road, Holt,
Norfolk, NR25 6EA.

Simon & Anne Harrap



Calling all Squirrels !

The winter activities of *Sciurus keymeri* have revealed a large hoard of biological journals, mostly going back many years, in the attic of The Old Smithy, Edgefield (TG096345). Before pest control officers are alerted to the squirrel's activities, and as there is a danger of the bedroom ceilings collapsing, it has been reluctantly decided to dispose of the journals. All *Sciurus* spp. (except of course that alien *S. carolinensis*!) are invited to apply for any of the following:-

- "Biologist", Journal of the Institute of Biology.
- "Birds", The magazine of the RSPB.
- "Natural World", The national magazine of The Wildlife Trusts.
- "Mammal Review", Journal of The Mammal Society.
- "BTO News", British Trust of Ornithology newsletter.
- "Oryx", Journal of Fauna & Flora International (previously Fauna & Flora Preservation Society).

There is no charge; simply collect what you would like from the habitat of *S. keymeri* - Telephone 01263 587365.

Ian Keymer

Please note....

the Ted Ellis Website is now:
<http://ourworld.cs.com/wheatlen>
and e-mail is
wheatlen@cs.com



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Proprietors: J Clifton & A Wander

A note to CONTRIBUTORS.

The next Natterjack will be in August. It would be much appreciated if any correspondence could be sent to the following address, *as soon as possible by July 1st*, and marked with NNNS on the envelope. For those with access to a computer a WORD document or an ordinary text file on disc would be most helpful, or you can send an e-mail to: francis.f@virgin.net

FF

Francis Farrow
'Heathlands'
6 Havelock Road
Sheringham
Norfolk
NR26 8QD



THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK



THE NATURAL
HISTORY MUSEUM

8 AUG 2000

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NNNS Excursions 2000-2001

Toad-in-the-hole...

Since the last 'Natterjack' the Society has appeared on national television, held its first ever appearance at the Royal Norfolk Show and jointly hosted a Public Open Day at Wheatfen with the Ted Ellis Trust. The latter two projects involving a lot of time and effort by council member David

Nobbs. From what I have heard both events can be deemed a success in attracting interest and new members. David deserves our thanks and a resounding pat on the back, particularly for the RNS days.

Less central to the NNNS but with much involvement by some of its members is the Beeston Common Management Group who recently

were presented with a 'highly commended' certificate for its long term commitment to the valuable wildlife site. The award was made on July 14th by North Norfolk District Council as part of their Environmental Awards 2000 community project. FF

Transactions

Vol. 33 Part 1

It has been noted that some of the photographs of the Sawfly larvae (between pages 50 and 51) have been printed in the wrong position. Please note that they should read as follows:

| Key: | |
|------|-----|
| 1-3 | 5-7 |
| 2-4 | 6-8 |

- Photo 1 should be Photo 7
- Photo 6 should be Photo 1
- Photo 7 should be Photo 6

also the heading opposite page 25 should read:

Two Orchids from Holt Country Park not Two Orchard from Holt Country Park. Similarly the Bird's-nest Orchard in the second paragraph should read Bird's-nest Orchard.

Freak Clover at Hilborough

Whilst recording plants for an on going project to update the Flora of Stamford Training Area, I was walking across Hook's Well Meadow, on the northern part of the area when I spotted half a dozen bright pink spikes of bloom at about 50 metres distance which were obviously something unusual. My first thought had been Pyramidal Orchids, but as I drew nearer there seemed to be a similarity with some exotic species of Bistort. I was therefore astonished to discover that the plant was a pink flowered clover with all the flowers deflexed instead of upright in the terminal head. The individual flowers were somewhat smaller than in normal red clover

(*Trifolium pratense*) and of a clearer pink. The leaves were like those of that plant, but the stems were somewhat elongated and I had the impression that they might even root along the stem, given time.

A similar note to this is being prepared to send to BSBI News, the newsletter of the Botanical Society of the British Isles, along with a colour slide of the plant. Gillian Beckett has seen a specimen and has not seen anything like it before, and I would be interested to hear from any one who has. The B.S.B.I unfortunately, do not have a referee covering the genus *Trifolium*. Bearing in mind the above, I am actually wondering if the plant might just be a hybrid *T. pratense* x *T. repens*. Any comment would be welcomed.

Alec Bull

The quarterly bulletin
of the
Norfolk & Norwich
Naturalists' Society



Founded 1869
Registered Charity No. 291604

Number 70
August 2000

Everything...s in the pink!

Pink elephants I can cope with, real live flying elephants - the Elephant Hawk Moths, of course - but pink woodlice? Bright pink woodlice the colour of boiled lobster!

Were the children winding me up again? Or was it just an extreme colour variation of the common woodlouse, *Philoscis muscorum*? This woodlouse can occur in shades of yellow, brown and even red as well as the normal grey.

"If it's got a big black line down the back it's a common *Philoscia*," I shouted as I shovelled up some debris of weeds and dust off the patio. The children were supposed to be moving bags of tin cans into the car to take to the recycling centre; instead they were huddled over a damp patch on the concrete-slabbed patio.

"No! It's pink with a yellow line down the back," one of them replied, "Come and look!" Humour them and we can get this job finished I thought as they moved apart to let me kneel down with them.

I was fairly confident that I knew all the types of woodlouse living in our garden. I had got a key to the British Woodlice a couple of years ago and have found four large flat species, the Pill Woodlouse that rolls into a ball, two tiny pale grey or brown species that are normally overlooked as babies of the larger species and the blind white woodlouse that abounds in ants' nests under the paving slabs.

Now I had another species, *Andronicus dentiger*, a smallish one under 6mm long but a distinct and obvious bright pink with a yellow line down the back. This must be a new arrival since I had

diligently checked any odd-coloured woodlice when I got the key and would have investigated any strange woodlouse.

According to the key this woodlouse is native to southern Britain and widely distributed, occurring in 20 of the 59 'vice-counties' used for recording purposes, and living in loose colonies often becoming common in the locality. It can survive in a variety of habitats and it should be easy to spot even for the non-expert.

With species like this one it makes one wonder why it seems so uncommon. Is it just a lack of people looking for it or does it need some microhabitat requirement we don't yet understand? Often the breakthrough in these situations comes not from scientific research but from casual observations from the public or detailed notes made by interested amateurs.

Robert Maidstone
Aug. '99

Friendly Robins

The path down to Salhouse Broad from the carpark is probably 400 yards or so long, but in this shortish stretch live many robins. All of them are fairly tame and quite happy to take crumbs from around your feet, but one at least, probably two, are so confident that they will fly on to an out stretched hand and feed.

Wendy and I have been trying recently to capture this on film. It has given much pleasure to see how confiding these lovely birds can be. We do have a pair of robins in the garden, they come to the bird table just outside the window, but they are very wary and leave as soon as somebody steps outside.

Tony Horvcs

Unusual Prey.

During a late afternoon walk (15th May) over Beeston Regis Common I disturbed a male Kestrel which took flight from the recently cleared heath at the southern end of the common. As it climbed I became aware of something in its talons. It was a reptile - an Adder about 15 -18" long - at least judging by its thickness and the habitat it was more likely to have been a snake than a slow-worm although I could not make out any colouring as it flew against a low sun. One foot gripped the unfortunate animal directly behind its head whilst the other held the middle of the snake, thus preventing any kind of attack presuming it was still alive. David and Janet Mower had commented to me previously that they had seen a Kestrel carrying an Adder near Holt Lowes around 1990. I checked in various references including BWP for any listing of this unusual prey and found that in fact snakes were only reported rarely as part of the diet and then generally from southern Europe.

Francis Farrow

A casualty of war!

The spectacular peregrine is a favourite with every birder but it wasn't always flavour of the month. Actress Prunella Scales, president of the Council for the Protection of Rural England, recalling her childhood in Devon during the war, remembers a woman "whose wartime job it was to find peregrine falcon nests and destroy the eggs, because the mature birds would prey on War Office carrier pigeons".

David Paull



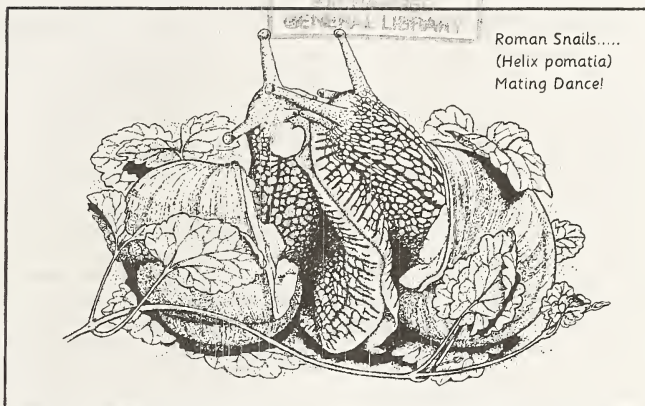
The Snail and the Equal Opportunities Course

As a Police Officer I have had to attend two Equal Opportunities courses. I came out of the second still confused as to how I felt about the subject. I thought that the principle of equal opportunity for women, and men, was admirable but seemed somehow to almost deny the differences that exist between the sexes. On the other hand there were some Old Cops who gave the female tutor a very hard time with their rather cliché and Victorian attitude to sexual equality. Both views had validity but I felt the need to consult Nature for an answer to my confusion.

On 25th July, 1999 I was watching the mating of *Helix pomatia*, the Roman or Apple Snail of garlic butter and French cuisine that so repulses the average British palette. Sadly not a Norfolk species, Europe's largest snail is now rare in Britain. These were part of a small colony I had found in the chalklands of Suffolk. They are huge, twice the size of *Helix aspersa*, the Garden Snail.

Roman Snails are hermaphrodites and these snails may have possibly mated earlier as they sat, balancing on their tails, sole to sole. At 2200 hours mating commenced. Both reared up, still sole to sole and a slow and extraordinarily sensual dance began. They rocked from side to side and mouthed each other whilst gently stroking each other's tentacles. A calcium dart was then fired from each dart sac into the body of the other snail. This apparently increases arousal and at 2230 copulation commenced. From the side of the head the sex organs burst forth like grotesque deformities. The male organ of each plugs into the other's female organ and sperm is passed between them. Each snail will then go on to develop and lay eggs in the soil.

At 2250 the sex organs were retracted and the snails lay together, tentacles placid, apparently exhausted well into the night.



Roman Snails....
(*Helix pomatia*)
Mating Dance!

Morning found them apart and feeding.

As I was pondering on the subject of equal opportunities at the time I wondered if it could all be solved if we were hermaphrodites, equal in every way. Why are we not hermaphrodites? It appears to me that no hermaphrodite has evolved much further than an animal that lays and then abandons its' eggs. The young are independent from the time of hatching.

In order for a human to grow a brain large enough to enable it to develop into the most fantastic creature on the planet takes a long time. Some 16 years or so are needed. Who will nurse it, care for it, protect it for every minute of the day, feed it, teach it and love it? Its' parents I hope! If we were hermaphrodites how could we possibly divide the labour. After all, what man could stay at home nursing the baby when he could go out hunting with his mates? The division and differences between the sexes clearly has a purpose. The answer I was looking for was an understanding that the roles of men and women are designed by Nature to be different but however different they may be they share equal importance in the overall plan, namely the bringing of our young to adult-hood and independence.

If the roles are equal in importance then so are the rights of each sex. It seems to me that a confusion between roles and rights is responsible for the problems from which the

equal opportunities Issue has evolved.

Mind you, I really don't know what all the fuss is about. Everyone knows that female is the greater sex...or is it? I find that life is easy if I capitulate to female demands at every opportunity! Is that a sexist comment? Oh dear, it seems I'm still confused.

Garth M. Coupland

SWALLOWTAIL SIGHTING

On Monday 3rd July 2000 I was walking along the north bank of the sloathe at West Somerton (TG464 205) when a Swallowtail butterfly flew across the path in front of me.

Is this an unusual sighting away from its' strong hold at Hickling and the Strumpshaw area?

Colin A Jacobs

From my experience Swallowtails can range many miles from their natural habitat, however, in this case the nearest colonies are probably at Horsey Mere, approximately 1 1/2 miles away, although it is possible they also occur around the adjacent Martham Broad. 'An Atlas of Norfolk Butterflies 1984 -1988' by MR Hall does show a 'dot' in the West Somerton tetrad. Perhaps therefore not that unusual but still a rare and beautiful sight. In 1989 a Swallowtail reached Beeston Regis, some 20 miles from its nearest known colony. FF

Fred Ashton remembered (2)

My first recollection of Fred was in the summer of 1935, when I used to visit Gunns in St. Giles street to get my entomological pins and also sometimes to purchase foreign birds for my aviary. Fred worked in a small room at the back of the shop opposite the small cages holding the Java Sparrows, Silver-bills, Cut-throats, Diamond Doves etc. No doubt any dead occupants finished up on his bench in due course.

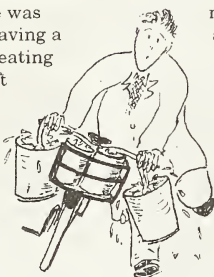
On one visit the door was open and I could see what he was doing. I think he was having a working lunch, he was eating sandwiches with his left hand whilst his right hand was rubbing a foxes skin with what he told me was arsenical soap. I thought of the old saying, "never let the left hand know what the right hand is up to". Lesser mortals would have died a grisly death attempting such an operation, but Fred evidently was immune.

He used to cycle miles all over the county to attend our field meetings and when we were having our lunch he would produce from his pockets some of the more recognizable road casualties he had picked up on his way, dead Stoats, Weasels or Squirrels seemed to be the usual. Not all those who were enjoying their cheese sandwiches were amused and a number would return their half-eaten lunch to the box and retire to the other side of their car. On one occasion he had made a detour to retrieve some carcasses before joining us at Wayland Wood near Watton. The lunch had started and as usual about halfway through Fred rummaged in his pockets and produced a paper bag from which he withdrew two Long-eared Bats, then stretching out their wings he

explained their life history etc. They looked perfect specimens, although he would not say where he had got them from he made it clear that he had a customer for them when he had plied his trade.

He was, as Reg Jones hinted in the last issue (*Natterjack* No. 69), a likable character. I can visualize him now, having passed him many times in Larkman Lane, pushing his trade cycle loaded up in front and with a large galvanized pail on each handlebar full of pigswill etc.

This gave him a very recognizable aroma as it often splashed out onto his coat and trousers.



One visit in 1939 I saw Fred putting the finishing touches to, I think it was, a Snow Goose. It looked super, and then many years later when I visited the museum in Liverpool I again saw the same goose and verified it by Gunn's label on it. It was then in the recent acquisition section.

Despite his appearance, he was an expert at his craft. His home was full of his work, and when visiting him one had to beware of the Tawny Owl that used to sit on top of the grandfather clock and would jump onto the shoulders of visitors if they approached too close. It would then try to make a meal of ones earlobes; either through affection or hunger I do not know which! I expect it finished up on the 'operating table' in due course.

Fred told me that he sometimes made a meal of a specimen he thought was edible "a pity to waste it" he would remark.

He was, as time went by, made an honorary member of the Society, as strict rules were enforced in his trade and times were getting hard for him.

Ken Durrant

A seasonal occurrence

In late May, my attention was drawn to a "fungus" present on the bark of the lime trees, particularly the younger specimens, which are a feature of Lime Tree Road in Norwich. The infestation took the form of numerous small clusters of white cottony threads, barely one centimetre in diameter, each being capped by a hard shield-like cover, warm-brown in colour and distinctively ridged. They were not associated with a fungal infection but scale insects, very like those illustrated in Chinery's *Insects* and labelled *Parthenolecanium corni*. However, after photographing a specimen, I referred the matter to Ken Durrant who identified the insect as a close relation of *P. corni* - *P. coyli*. Each unit was a degenerate female, wingless and legless, and quite static on the bark of the tree. I gather such infestations have been widespread in Norwich since your.

Reg Jones

Pigmy Shrews

Please note the reference by Tony Leech to AB/RB, in the May issue of *Natterjack*, as having been responsible for the destruction of two Pigmy Shrews in a second loft in Edgefield is incorrect. The loft concerned was in a bungalow in East Tuddenham, the property of A & R Bull



Alec Bull

Broom Galls

I read with interest two recent notes about galls on broom (Feb & May 2000), as the gall-former, *Aceria genistae* (Nalepa) (recently moved from *Eriophyes*), is currently being considered as a potential biological control agent for *Cytisus scoparius* for several countries (Australia, New Zealand, Canada, USA and Chile) where broom is a serious exotic weed. A biological control agent is a natural enemy of the target weed that is both highly specific to the weed and also damaging under a wide range of environmental conditions. The aim of biological control is to use these agents to bring down the abundance of this weed in its exotic range without any risk that the agents will move on to other plant species in this environment. These activities assume that a lack of natural enemies on the weed in the exotic range may have been part of the cause of its invasion. *Aceria genistae* can certainly be damaging. It has been observed to kill plants in shady conditions in southern France. The exact host range of the species is not so precisely defined.

Aceria genistae sensu latu has quite a wide number of recorded hosts range forming galls on *Cytisus scoparius* and *Cytisus purgans* (including horticultural varieties and hybrids with these as parents) and *Ulex europaeus*, but also having been collected off, *Ulex parviflorus*, *Genista pilosa*, *G. cinerea*, *G. corsica*, *G. tinctoria*, *G. monspessulana* and *Spartium junceum*. Recent work has shown that mites from galls on *Spartium* are a separate species (*Aceria spartii* (Castagnoli 1978)), and causal observations have shown that when galled *C. scoparius* plants are in close association with *Ulex europaeus*, *Cytisus striatus*



(very hairy pods) and *Cytisus multiflorus* (white flowers) where they have been widely planted along roadsides in the UK and in continental Europe galls are restricted to *C. scoparius*. Also where galls have been seen on *Ulex europaeus* in New Zealand adjacent *C. scoparius* plants had no galls. This had led to the idea that *A. genistae* is either still a complex of several species or at least has a number of clearly distinguished host races.

Before *A. genistae* can be clearly useful as a biological control agent this last conundrum needs to be solved. To address the problem we are conducting a taxonomic analysis of *A. genistae* collected from a number of host species and a number of localities. I would be very interested to hear from anyone who would be prepared to collect galls for us from broom or related garden varieties (if variety is known) from Norfolk. What we are after is 5 galls from 5 separate plants from a site dropped into tubes of ethanol (galls from one plant can go in the same tube). Your assistance would be duly acknowledged in any forthcoming publication. I can be contacted at the address below and can provide the tubes and ethanol if necessary. Any non-*C. scoparius* host records would also be of great interest to me.

Many thanks
Andy Sheppard

CSIRO Entomology,
European Laboratory
Campus International de Baillarguet
34980 MONTFERRIER-SUR-LEZ France

email: andys@ento.csiro.au

Foreign Conifer Hedging!

I have some good news about these fast growing "Foreign" conifer hedges, that received a lot of bad publicity in the national Press some time ago. Apart from the obvious fact that planting them only in a position that is not going to cause future problems, I have to report that the local wild bird population really approve of them! Some twelve years ago I planted a "hedge" of Castlewallan Leyland Cypress along the east side of my garden, stretching about 120ft. in length and in front of it another row of various garden conifers, making a solid barrier to the east and also as a screen to and for the newly converted barn next door. My garden is in a very rural position on the edge of open organic farmland. The "Hedge" is more like a line of small individual trees having been planted originally at about twelve feet apart.

This season I can report the following birds nesting in these conifers: From north to south: Chaffinch, then about twelve feet on Long Tailed Tits. Approx. 15ft. on a Blackbird, then Dunnock after approx another 15ft. Song Thrush 10 ft further on and Finally (I think!) Greenfinches. The great thing about these conifers is that they are virtually cat and Sparrow-hawk proof!

Of course the birds aren't daft! I feed them (two birdtables) and also have battery powered ultrasonic "Cat Scarers" around the garden (which I hasten to add are harmless!).

Roger A R Clarke



THE SCOLT HEAD ISLAND EXPERIENCE

The Society were invited by English Nature to spend the second week in June to study some aspects of the natural history of Solt Head Island. The specific areas of interest focused on the diatom flora of the salt marshes and the invertebrate communities associated with shrubby seablade *Suaeda fruticosa*.

The data from these studies will be published later but in this report we would like to write about some of the wider interests which we enjoyed on the reserve.

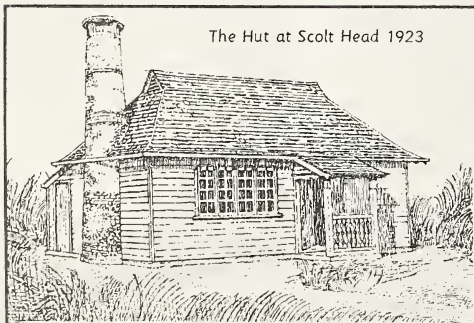
The dunes support myriads of the lovely bee orchid *Ophrys apifera*. So many in the dune sand-sedge swards so great care had to be taken not to crush them underfoot. Elsewhere in Norfolk the bee orchid occurs rarely and in smaller numbers but on Solt it is everywhere. There is a magnificent picture of a bee orchid in Gillian Beckett and Alec Bull's *A Flora of Norfolk* on page 265. Often in the same groupings we came across spikes of the pyramidal orchid *Gymnadenia conopsea* and the contrasting colours of the two species beautified the dunes. The flowers of pyramidal orchids only appear after five to ten years growth and

during this time the plant is heavily dependent upon its mycorrhizal fungus. The mucilage derived from the root tubers goes under the pharmaceutical name of 'Salep' which is an Arabic word describing 'testicles of a fox'. Salep mucilage was used in Britain to relieve itching.

Sea holly *Eryngium maritimum* thrives on the fore dunes and again one had to walk carefully so as not to destroy the delicate silver-green leaves and bright blue thistle like flowers. In their *Flora* Gillian and Alec write that, "First recorded when Sir Thomas Browne noted that he had received information from the 'eryngo diggers' of Yarmouth in 1668". Apparently its roots were eaten as a sweet-meat after being candified. The generic *Eryngium* is taken from the Greek ereugomai which means 'I belch'. The plant was once used to relieve flatulence. Sea bindweed *Calystegia soldanella* produced pink carpets with their trumpet-shaped flowers. The blossoms are visited by bumble bees, hawk-moths and small bee-flies. Another feature of the dunes are the stands of common polypody ferns and more extensive bushes of privet.

collected. These came to lamps on or near the dunes where privet formed a shrubby cover. In the day-time we noted a number of Painted Ladies, Common Blue and Small Heaths. Ragwort was often covered with caterpillars of the Cinnabar Moth and many adults were also seen. Other moths caught included Mother Shipton, Nutmeg, Common Wainscot, Large Yellow Underwing and Sand Dart.

The foreshore at Solt is covered in places by the shells of gastropods and bivalves. The two species of razor shells noted included the colonising *Ensis americanus* from the other side of the Atlantic. The fleshy feet of razor shells when cooked in butter and with salt and black pepper and considered by some to be a delicacy, but then so is tripe!!! Another invader of our Norfolk coast washed up on the shore is the American Slipper Limpet which was accidentally introduced into the UK from America in 1890 and first noted in Norfolk in the mid-1970s. Species of cockles, gapers, piddocks, buckies, whelks, mussels, scallops and oysters also littered the water line. A shell collectors paradise!!!!



The Hut at Solt Head 1923

The fresh winds over Solt limited the numbers of moths caught during the stay but two nights trapping resulted in five Privet Hawk-moths being

We are planning to resume our studies in late August through day visits. This will mean catching and early morning tide and returning on the evening tide. If anyone would like to join us then please telephone Roy Baker (01508 570 609).

Roy Baker,
Keith Clarke,
Derek Howlett

FIELD & INDOOR MEETINGS Aug - Oct 2000

Please note that start times are variable and that one of the meetings this quarter can only take limited numbers so that booking is essential.

I Rubber boots recommended.

II Rubber boots essential.

Saturday 5th August

Cranwich Heath.

11.00 a.m. Full Day.

Directions: Leave the Mundford roundabout westwards on the A134 towards Downham Market & King's Lynn. After about 1 Km., bear left towards Methwold then take the first road left (just before Cranwich Camp). Meet at the entrance to Fire Route 43, TL772934. The meeting will have special records to beetles and the Norfolk beetle recorder, Martin Collier, will be joining us.

Leader: Nick Gibbons.

Saturday 13th August

North Cove Reserve, Suffolk.

10.45 a.m. Full Day.

Directions: Heading east on the A146 from the Beccles bypass towards Lowestoft, North Cove church is just after the B1127 roundabout. TM461893. As there is limited parking at the reserve, we will leave some cars near the church and share transport to the reserve itself. This is a joint meeting with the British Plant Gall Society.

Leader: Rex Hancy

Sunday 20th August

Heggatt Hall, Horstead.

11.00 a.m. Full Day.

Directions: Park at the Hall, TG271183 This was the venue of the first excursion of the society in 1869. We are grateful to Mr. Gurney who has given us permission to visit the site on this occasion.

Leader: Ken Durrant.



Sunday 27th August

Carlton Marshes Reserve, Suffolk.

11.00 a.m. Full Day.

Directions: There is parking at the Wildlife Centre (turn north off the A146 near Carlton Colville). TM508920. This is a joint meeting with the Great Yarmouth Naturalists' Society

Saturday 2nd Sept.

Orford Ness, Suffolk.

10.30 a.m. Full Day.

Directions: We will meet in the Pay and Display car park at Orford. TM426496. The party is limited to 24 persons so please book with Stephen Martin on 01603 810327.

Leader: David Paull.

Sunday 10th Sept.

Great Ryburgh.

11.00 a.m. Full Day.

Directions: From the A1067, turn west at Stibbard. After the maltings, turn north into Highfield Lane then follow the track to Highfield farm and park on the sugar beet pad at TF946279. We will be walking through meadows and woods in the Wensum Valley.

Leader: Robin Goolden.

Sunday 24th Sept.

Santon Meadows

11.00 a.m. Full Day.

Directions: Meet at the car park by the railway crossing in Santon Downham. TL821880. We will be recording the meadows and the meeting will be combined with a "field workshop" on spiders.

Leaders: Nick Gibbons and Garth Coupland.

Sunday 1st October

Ditchingham House Estate

11.00 a.m. Full Day

Directions: Park in the meadow by Wood House. TM324915. A fungus foray by kind permission of Dorothy Cheyne.

Leader: Mike Woolner.



Sunday 8th October

Cley/Blakeney

11.00 a.m. Full Day

Directions: Meet at the NWT car park at Cley Beach. TG048453. A walk mainly for birds.

Leader: Mike Poulton.

Sunday 15th October

Kelling Heath

11.00 a.m. Full Day

Directions: Turn north from the A148 Holt / Cromer road just west of Bodham towards Weybourne. Turn west at the sign to Kelling Heath Holiday Park and meet in the car park at TG108415. A fungus foray.

Leader: Tony Leech.

INDOOR MEETINGS

To be held at Room 7, The Sports and Leisure Centre, Easton College, Easton, Norwich. 7.30 p.m.

Tuesday 19th September

"Norfolk Valley Fans"

Dr. Francis Rose

Tuesday 17th October

"The Norfolk Hedgerow Survey"

Dr. Tom Williamson

Bob Ellis, Chairman
Programme Committee

Ebb & Flow Marshes

(TG363160)

Species List from Field Trip
18th June 2000

Butterflies

Large Skipper *Ochlodes venata*
Swallowtail *Papilio machaon*
Brimstone *Gonepteryx rhamni*
Large White *Pieris brassicae*
Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*
Small Tortoiseshell *Aglais urticae*
Speckled Wood *Pararge aegeria*
Meadow Brown *Maniola jurtina*

Moths

Cinnabar *Tyria jacobaeae*
Silver Y *Autographa gamma*
Green Oak *Tortrix viridana*

Dragonflies

Blue-tailed Damselfly *Ischnura elegans*
Azure Blue Damselfly *Coenagrion puella*
Red-eyed Damselfly *Erythromma najas*
Hairy Dragonfly *Brachytron pratense*
Norfolk Hawker *Aeshna isosceles*
Emperor *Anax imperator*
Broad-bodied Chaser *Libellula depressa*
Four-spotted Chaser
Libellula quadrimaculata

Beetles

Longhorn Beetle
Agapanthea villosa viridescens

Birds

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*
Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*
Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*
Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Paul King



Please note:

The Norfolk Bat Group now has its own domain name and site:

<http://www.norfolk-bat-group.org.uk>

Comments please to Mark Benfield:

markbenfield@netscape.net

'Warnings from the Wild'

Many of you no doubt would have seen the BBC2 television programme '*Warnings from the Wild*' presented by Julian Petifer on May 10 which featured members of the Society at a meeting on Beeston Common last year, led by Ken Durrant. Apart from this the BBC also put up a synopsis of the programme on the 'World Wide Web'. The following account regarding the Society was taken from that website:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/nature/earth/warnings>

NORFOLK UK

Butterfly increases its range

We were looking for a story from the UK to bring it home to viewers that climate change is not just something which is happening to exotic species in far away places.

At a wildlife and climate change conference in Norwich in September 1999, we heard a presentation from Jane Hill of the University of Durham, who talked about the spread of the speckled wood butterfly *Parage aegeria* throughout England.

She explained how insects such as butterflies were particularly responsive to climate change, and how this species had been rapidly shifting its distribution northwards over the past 50 years.

One of the themes we wanted to develop in the programme was the importance of information collected by amateur naturalists in many scientific studies. Above all, researches studying climate change need long time series of data so they can track changes in species behaviour and distribution over the years and then compare these with changes in temperature. In many cases, amateurs have provided this data, and so we looked for local groups in Norfolk who might be continuing this tradition

We were fortunate to hear about Ken Durrant and the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society. They were planning a Sunday Walk on Beeston Common - where, in 1990, the first speckled wood had been recorded on its recent expansion northwards - and we went along to film them as they collected data.



Ken Durrant

The above account also included a direct link (hyperlink) to the Society's own website. Such a link will certainly provide the NNNS with an international status and who knows might even increase the membership!

FF

Millennium Conservation Tuesday November 21st

This meeting will be a discussion forum with a panel consisting of Dr. Roy Baker (N&NNS), Brendan Joyce (NWT), Andy Millar (EN), and Ian Robinson (RSPB). The title will be "Management or Non-intervention". In order to start the ball rolling and to allow the panellists to prepare for the evening, **members are invited to submit written questions**. The forum chairman will select several of these and the members will have the opportunity to read the question to the panellists. After each written question, we hope there will be further questions from the floor followed by lively debate. If you have a written question you would like to submit to the panel, please send it to Dr. Stephen Martin at 3 St John's Close, Hethersett, Norwich, NR9 3DQ or e-mail it to:

smartin@redhotant.com
by 30 October 2000.

Please address questions to the panel as a whole.

ADVANCE NOTICE

'An Evening in the Countryside'

Wed. 22nd November 2000

An evening event at
The Playhouse, Norwich in aid
of the 'We-care' Appeal

Presentation of slides followed
by a question and answer
session featuring the EDP
nature correspondents:

Grace Corne - Rex Hancy
Moss Taylor - Percy Trett

Full Details Later

A note to CONTRIBUTORS.

The next *Natterjack* will be in November. It would be much appreciated if any correspondence could be sent to the following address, *as soon as possible by October 1st*, and marked with NNNS on the envelope. For those with access to a computer a WORD document or an ordinary text file on disc would be most helpful, or you can send an e-mail to: francis.f@virgin.net

FF

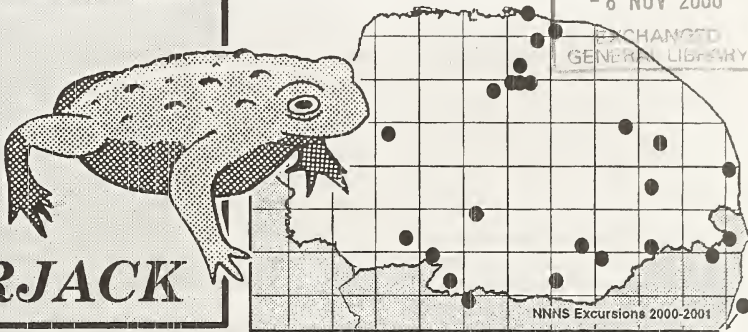
Francis Farrow
'Heathlands'
6 Havelock Road
Sheringham
Norfolk
NR26 8QD



- 8 NOV 2000

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GENERAL LIBRARY

THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK



Toad-in-the-hole...

A bumper edition - many excursion reports, articles and your very own Christmas Crossword from Bob Ellis (maybe for the quiet time after the turkey and plum pud!). Happy Christmas to all members.

I have had a very large postbag and even by sneaking in another page (hope the Treasurer doesn't notice) I still have articles remaining. My apologies for not putting everything in but some of the notes are more appropriate for other times of the year and will be used nearer those times. My thanks to everyone who has contributed over the year and I look forward to receiving more from members in 2001.

FF

Norfolk First Again?

In *British Wildlife* (Vol. 11, No. 5) during a general discussion on moths, the Norfolk Moth Group (in which many Society members are active) is highlighted as probably the first organisation (started 1985) of its kind of the many now established countrywide.

R.A.R

I'm collecting material together about the late Richard Richardson, with a view to writing a biography about this well-known, popular ornithologist and artist who lived at Cley in Norfolk from 1949 until his death in 1977.

At this stage I am gathering the names of Richard's friends and acquaintances who might be prepared to share their memories and let me have any anecdotes or stories involving him for inclusion in the book. I am also very keen to locate as much memorabilia as possible, be it letters or post cards sent by Richard, his personal birding diaries, or sketches and paintings by him.

One reason for deciding to embark on this project is the appearance of an early draft of a proposed book about the birds of Cley, handwritten by Richard in about 1960, which has recently come into my possession. Almost twenty species' texts have been completed and I believe that they merit publication. Therefore, I plan to include them all in Richard's biography, along with articles he wrote for various bird journals, and, of course, a wide selection of his line drawings and paintings. All contributions to the contents of the book will be fully acknowledged.

I am keen to make contact with as many of Richard's friends as possible, particularly anyone who may be able to provide me with information about his early days before he moved to Cley in 1949.

I would be delighted to hear from anyone who thinks that they could contribute to the book.

Moss Taylor,
4 Heath Road, Sheringham, Norfolk,
NR26 8JH. Tel: 01263-823637.
E-mail: mosstaylor@care4free.net



Bittern design (1970) by Richard Richardson and first used on the cover of the Norfolk Young Naturalists newsletter - Issue 16.

The quarterly bulletin
of the
Norfolk & Norwich
Naturalists' Society



Number 71
November 2000

SCALE INSECTS

I was interested to read Reg Jones article in the *Natterjack* no 70 about the Scale insects on Limes *Tillia* sp.

In 1998 The Late Brian Brown & Charles Barsted of The Lowestoft Field Club informed me of these insects on Limes in Lowestoft High Street. On inspection I too identified them as possible *Partenolcanium corni* but I did not seem to be 100% sure.

In the August of that year I was given for my Birthday the RHS Pests & Diseases book by Pippa Greenwood & Andrew Halstead. There on page 137 was the insect that I had seen on the Limes. Known as the Horse Chestnut Scale Insect *Pulvinaria regalis*. It is a sap feeding insect that has one generation a year. I have found the heaviest infestations on road side Limes in Church Road Lowestoft & on Sycamores in Bell Vue Park in the town it is believed that they are able to exist where a micro climate is formed by the heat reflecting off roadsides and cars in car parks and the like. The females lay their eggs under a white cotton wool like substance. This substance appears from the rear of the insects shell. Most scales I measured were 4-5mm in length and were found up on the trunks of the trees and into some of the lower branches. After egg laying the adults die leaving small white eggs on the bark. I have found that by looking on the undersides of the leaves you can see the young scales. Later on around October time they are seen to go onto the bark and overwinter as nymphs.

These Scale insects have never, as far as I know ever been seen in the Lowestoft district before. On talking to Rex Hancy he says that they

are steadily moving northwards from the south of Britain.

My occupation with these strangers is to try and find them on other trees within the town as I believe Rex is doing in Norwich.

Colin A Jacobs

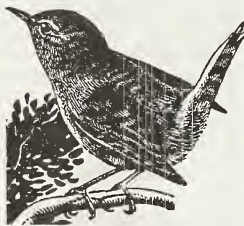
House Guests

During a recent visit, our friends from Massachusetts, told us about a family of wrens. A wren flew into their kitchen by way of a gap at the bottom of the door and proceeded to build its nest in the corner of a kitchen shelf. Using the base and corner walls as part of the nest, a top cover was constructed and a small aperture left for entry.

Eggs were laid and nestlings hatched and fed by mother who consistently entered the room via the bottom of the door. Evacuation day arrived. Mother could not persuade her young to follow her out into the big wide world. Finally our friends opened the door and the family flew away. Three days later one of the young wrens returned to the door and entered the kitchen using its mother's under door route. It flew into the nest, flew out again and away.

We wondered if anyone in the Society had come across a wren being so confident among humans or of a young bird making a solo return to its birthplace.

Susan & Tom Pallister



MYSTERY OF MOSSES

You may never have looked at a moss or liverwort, except perhaps in your lawn, when perhaps you wished it wasn't there. They don't like competition from other plants, so mowing your lawn too short will encourage them. Cutting with a mower without a grass box will increase the moss because small pieces can often grow again.

So what is a moss or liverwort? They are small primitive plants which don't have roots, only rhizoids, which enable them to cling onto soil, trees or rocks. All their water and nutrients are absorbed through their leaves which in most cases are only one cell thick. To reproduce they require water and so there are far more of them in the west and north than in East Anglia. Norfolk has about 260 mosses and 80 liverworts, whilst in Britain as a whole there are about 600 mosses and 280 liverworts.

Liverworts are of two types, thallose or leafy. An example of a thallose liverwort is *Marchantia polymorpha* which you may have seen at a garden nursery on pots or inside plastic greenhouses. The thallus is robust, several cells thick, and regularly forked. On the top surface will be cups containing gemmae. These are splashed out by rain to start fresh plants.

A leafy liverwort has three rows of small leaves on a stem. The leaves do not have nerves, and may have their leaves divided into lobes such as *Lophocolea bidentata*, which has each leaf divided into two points, or bidentate. This is very common in damp areas, growing through mosses on the ground.

Mosses are of two types: single stems with the seta growing from the top, usually forming cushions,

and feather mosses where the main stem is long and trails on the ground with side branches giving the impression of a feather, with any seta arising from the side of a branch. They all have leaves usually spirally around a stem. They mostly have a nerve or midrib; this can be any length, even protruding out of the end of the leaf. The edge of the leaf can be entire or indented with small teeth, sometimes double teeth.

Leaves are of many different shapes, some with hair points which makes the tips look white. Cell size and shape is important in identification. Some cells are round, others long and narrow. Some leaves may have auricles at the bottom with cells of different shape to the main cells.

To look at these features requires first a 10x lens. Some mosses you can tell just by looking at them and by where they are growing. *Bryum argenteum*, as its name suggests, is silvery. It grows on the edge of asphalt paths, even in towns. Half the secret is in knowing what grows in each habitat.

Once you get interested you will need a handbook. The best one to start with is E V Watson's *British Mosses and Liverworts*, Cambridge University Press. Next you will need a microscope. I have a binocular dissecting one with both top and bottom light and magnification of 10x and 30x. This is excellent for a first look at a moss. I dunk the moss in some water to clean it and bring it back to life. In fact you can do this after having been dried for several years. This magnification is often enough to identify a specimen, but to look at cells you need a compound microscope. I bought a second hand one from Brunel Microscopes, it has 4x, 10x, 40x and 100x objectives, but I only use

the first three for bryophytes. With a 10x eyepiece, this gives 40x, 100x and 400x magnification. It has built in illumination and a measuring graticule in the eyepiece for measuring cell size.

The best way to get into bryophytes is to go on outings with other bryologists. You will find a list of our meetings in this issue.

You need to collect small specimens in a herbarium. They are collected in the field, a pinch is enough. I put them in old DL envelopes which I always open by cutting off the right hand end to get the letter out. This makes a useful packet on which you can write the name, habitat, map reference, date and who has confirmed it. When you get them home, stand the packets up on a window sill above a radiator to dry. Once dry they will keep forever. To examine the specimen, soak in a little water to revive, squeeze out the water and tease out so that you can see the different parts of the plant. After examining, they can be kept in paper packets. I use an A4 sheet of paper, an old letter will do. Fold it up with the letter inside, first a third up, then each side in one inch and finally the top down a third. This gives a packet roughly six inches by four inches which just fits in an old shoe box. Headings can be printed on the front flap with a computer, plus fold marks to make life easier.

John Mott
Bryophyte Recorder
East Norfolk (VC27)



2000 Year of the Clouded Yellow Saxthorpe

SEPT 4 - Fine sunny day. Few light showers during the morning. Checked fields on Aylsham Road. Saxthorpe for Golden Plover. Noticed yellow butterflies amongst beans. This is the first year A Mitchell & Co. are growing NORTHERN SOYA for seed. Sown early May - exceptional leaf growth and beans now forming. 26 Clouded Yellows counted mainly in one area.

SEPT 5 - Dull - no butterflies seen.

SEPT 6 - Fine morning - rain later. Sunny afternoon - very windy. 2 Clouded Yellows seen. Also checked fields at Heydon and Cawston - no butterflies seen.

SEPT 8 - Rain early then fine but no sun. 5 Clouded Yellows seen. One resting on a bean leaf - wings closed - blends in and very difficult to see. One feeding on Scentless Mayweed.

SEPT 9 - 45 Clouded Yellows seen flying over field and also feeding. Watched feeding on heartsease, Persian speedwell, corn sowthistle, nipplewort and scentless mayweed. Other plants not visited were mugwort, fat hen, black bindweed, knotgrass, redshank and corn mint. Walked across potato field to many other flowering plants as above but no butterflies seen here.

SEPT 11 - Checked fields at Heydon and Cawston again. No butterflies seen.

SEPT 14 - 10am Fine but not sunny - very little wind. 10 butterflies seen flying across tops of beans - not feeding on weeds. Beans approximately 24 inches high. Many leaves with holes but not necessarily caterpillars. No caterpillars seen. Hairly Snail on one leaf. Evidence of snails on other plants. Plants still very green.

SEPT 21 - Windy, sunny - 4 Clouded Yellows seen.

SEPT 27 - 7 Clouded Yellows seen.

SEPT 28 - 5 Clouded Yellows seen.

Anne Brewster

The Sinister Queen of the Tower

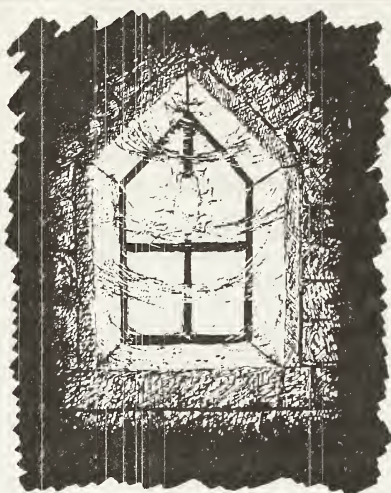
The air was fetid as I climbed the cramped spiral steps of the tower. My torchlight stabbed into the darkness above and my boots crunched on the dry, mummified bodies of pigeons lying on the thick carpet of droppings that filled each stone step. An updraft of rank air bowed the enormous cobwebs that brushed my head. I was in a most unpleasant place.

I had been on duty in a Police riot van when we received a call to attend Gt. Yarmouth's St. Nicholas Church where a man had been seen on the roof. With my colleagues surrounding the building I was ascending a small side tower to gain access to the roofs of England's largest parish church.

The owners of the cobwebs were huge. They waited menacingly in tubes at the point where the sheet web met the old flint and brick interior walls of the tower. I had never seen such large spiders and my excitement quite overwhelmed my apprehension at blundering into a burglar waiting at the top of the tower.

What awaited me in that small domed chamber was the sinister "Queen" of all these spiders. Much larger than the others she had pride of place by a small leaded window where no doubt the flies who fed on the death, filth and decay below gathered at the light in hope of escape from the tower.

Her majesty sat upon a beautifully suspended white, cocoon-like web in the centre of which could be



discerned a whiter sphere. This was her egg sac but the impression was of a fearsome guardian of some mystical runic treasure.

Tegenaria parietina, the Cardinal Spider, is one of four contenders for the title of Britain's largest spider. The others are the Raft Spider *Dolomedes plantarius*, who is generally bulky all round. A female *Araneus quadratus*, heavy with eggs is reputed to weigh the most. *Segestria florentina*, of south coast walls, has the longest body length. This Queen was visibly larger than any of these. She had an enormous abdomen and a body length later measured at 22 mm. Each leg was about 50 mm long!

The species is distributed throughout South and Eastern England and unknown elsewhere on mainland Britain. It is generally uncommon and appears to prefer undisturbed buildings. It was a thrill to find such thriving colonies in all the side towers of the church.

I examined the contents of her lair; a bag shaped web below her tubular retreat containing mangled corpses of her prey, and was surprised to find no flies at all. The odd woodlouse and the chitinous remains of the equally fearsome woodlouse feeding spider, *Dysdera crocata* were the only recognizable prey.

Oh! The burglar? He escaped somehow into the night. Or perhaps he made it to the top of the large bell tower where his macerated cadaver will one day be discovered in the web of an even larger and more sinister -

"Queen of the Tower".

Garth M. Coupland
PC 215 Ade Police Station

The Halcyon Bird

Recently I spent a day fishing at a Norfolk Lake where the water is surrounded by willow and alder trees. During the day I had a frequent companion in the form of a Kingfisher. This jewel of the bird world would announce its passage by a shrill, high pitched call as it flew across the lake. On a couple of occasions it perched on a branch in full view.

It sat very still scanning the water below, sometimes changing its position to face the other way, but always intently watching the surface. I marvelled at its ability to discern small fish in the water below, for there was a strong ripple on the rather murky lake, but see them it did and several minnow size fish met their fate. This lovely bird seems to be holding its own in Norfolk, long may it do so.

Tony Howes

TALES FROM THE MOTH TRAP

With the summer nights so full of big catches, 100 species of moths in the moth trap is easily encountered on many nights, I have witnessed 180 species at Thorpe-ness in Suffolk and 155 at Wicken Fen, but its not just moths that I have found in my traps over the past twelve years, not even the wasps, flies or those terribly smelly burying beetles that one often finds, but what about the things that really should not be in the trap. I remember the times when I lived in Shetland and it was always so disheartening to find only about ten species, if this were not bad enough imagine finding our cat inside the moth trap eating what little there was!

Once trapping in North Wales I had a Tawny Owl sat above the trap not only frightening the daylight out of the moths but me as well, as I was feeling rather uncomfortable due to a car being continually driven passed me on a number of occasions with the driver looking like a mad axe man.

I often have company with bats flying above the light taking an incoming prey but as is usually the case nothing in late summer and autumn, especially in woodland, I am joined by hornets, not just devouring the moths but themselves as well, I have been at Foxley Wood and been joined by 40 plus hornets in one trap! I have just obtained thick rubber gloves and a beekeepers hat and netting for future trapping in woods at this time of year!

Imagine a friend of mine looking in disbelief at Fordham Wood in Cambridgeshire as a fox once took his wine rope (a rope soaked in

wine, treacle, etc, to attract and dope the moths) from a fence post and disappear full pace off into the distance with it slurping from its mouth!

I was once at Swanton Great Wood at the end of August and having loaded everything back into the car the morning after, I found a slow worm hiding under the trap, initially thinking a first glimpse it was an adder, the trap and electric's were flung some ten feet! If you think this rather amusing bare a thought for a 'critter' hunt in California USA and while trapping moths they had a diamond back come to light..... not the diamond back moth but a diamond back rattle snake!!!

I must admit that a few years ago, quite odd for a moth catcher, I used to be afraid of the dark, especially those dark, creepy woods when anything could jump out on you (I am glad I can admit I have conquered this now!) and while at Holt Loves one night going through the actinic trap there was a rustling in the undergrowth, it got closer and closer and then it jumped out at me..... it was a toad after a free meal!!!!!! The same night deep in the back and beyond away from the main road and at 2am the car would

not start and having to walk two miles into Holt to phone for help, the RAC found it one of there most unusual cases!

Even this year I have weird and wonderful things still happen, a survey at the RSPB's Lakenheath Fen in Suffolk with visits once a month, we have to drive three miles along a dusty and bumpy track, through reed beds to get to Botany Bay, an 'ancient' reed-bed where we trap, at the end of this rally I come across a ram-shack wooden bungalow. In the middle of no where is an understatement, and intrigues me that it should have net curtains, why? If you have ever seen the film 'Texas Chain Saw Massacre' then this is the place! I was bursting to knock on the door to see who lived there, and eventually plucked up courage in August with the excuse of letting them know what we were doing at 'not to be worried'; I waited to see who would come to the door.... I expected a thin gaunt man with string vest and blood shot eyes, Hannibal Lecter maybe..... imagine my disappointment when a little blonde lady came with just a night shirt on!!!!!! As I say, never a dull moment when moth trapping with me!

Jon Clifton

Copper Bryony

Although the chlorophyll is still there, it is difficult to imagine that the purplish colour in the leaves of plants such as the copper beech could confer any benefit on the plant. I have always presumed that the character arose by mutation and would persist only in cultivation



where survival of the fittest gives way to survival of the protected, so I shall follow with interest the fate of a 'copper' black bryony (*Tamus communis*) growing in a hedgerow near Holt. It appeared to be growing normally but has died back sooner than the typically pigmented plant beside it. Does anyone know of other examples of this pigmentation in wild plants?

Tony Leech

FIELD & INDOOR MEETINGS Nov 2000 - Jan 2001

Please note that start times are variable.

- Rubber boots recommended.
- Rubber boots essential.

Sunday 7th January ■
Breydon Water.
10.30 a.m. Full Day.

Directions: Meet in the ASDA supermarket car park. TG520080. The plan is to walk westwards at low tide and then follow the tide back in. With luck, there will be good numbers of waders.

Leader: Ian Robinson.

INDOOR MEETINGS

To be held at Room 7, The Sports and Leisure Centre, Easton College, Easton, Norwich. 7.30 p.m.

Tuesday 21st November
Millennium Conservation Forum:
"Management or non-intervention"

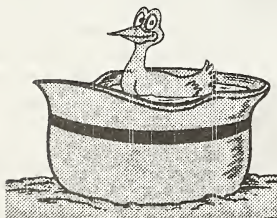
There is still an opportunity to submit written questions to the panel. These should be sent to Stephen Martin (address on back of programme) or e-mailed to smartin@redhotant.com
AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

Tuesday 19th December
"Gall stories and galling friends"
Rex Hancy

By popular demand, there will again be festive refreshments provided. However, please note that members will be invited to make a small voluntary contribution towards the cost of these.

Tuesday 16th January
"Wildlife in the Stanford Battle Area"
Alec Bull

*Bob Ellis, Chairman
Programme Committee*



EAST ANGLIAN BRYOLOGICAL EXCURSIONS 2000 - 2001

The following excursions are planned for the Autumn & Spring of 2000-2001. Beginners will be most welcome; the only equipment needed is a hand lens (x 10 or x 20), and some paper packets for collecting into. Meetings will only be cancelled if it snows, or there is hard frost. All meetings will start at 10.30am, unless otherwise stated. For further information, contact either John Mott or Robin Stevenson. (See below - on page 9)

Sunday 29 October: Catfield Hall Estate.
Meet by war memorial at TG382213.

Sunday 12 November: Smallburgh Fen
NWT reserve. An SSSI, calcareous mire, 3 ha. Park on Union Road verge at TG326243.

Saturday 25 November: Roydon Common
NWT reserve. Heath, bog & fen carr. Car park at TF677227. The track in is fairly rough, so take it steady.

Sunday 10 December: Fen Covert,
Walberswick
Meet at car park at 5-way junction,
TM450727.

Sunday 17 December: Roman Camp
National Trust and Inceborough Hill.
Meet in car park at TG184413.

Saturday 6 January: Dunwich Heath.
Meet in National Trust car park by coastguard cottages (charge for non NT members) TM476678.

Sunday 21 January: East Winch
NWT reserve. Open heath, pools, woodland.
Park at side of lane off A47 at TF698160.

Saturday 3 February: Pigney's Wood.
In 1991 the North Norfolk Community Woodland Trust purchased 21 hectares of land within the parish of Knapton near North Walsham. Planting started in 1993. The wood is bordered on the NW side by the disused railway line, which is the Paston Way. The North Walsham and Dilham canal runs along the south side. Meet in car park off Hall Lane at TG 297323 on the east side.

Sunday 18 February: Thetford Heath.
Meet at TL849795. This is entrance to Gorse Industrial Estate. Park on edge of wide road, quiet at weekends.

Sunday 4 March: NNNS meeting.
An introduction to mosses & liverworts. Meet Woodland Trust car park, TM205893. Leader John Mott. Starts 11.00am.

Sunday 18 March: Horsey Mere,
202 ha, SSSI, open water, fen and grazing marsh, and Horsey Gap, coast. Meet in National Trust car park (fee possible?) at TG456223.

Excursion Reports

Parish Potter

July 23rd 2000.

Around ten members attended the Parish Potter at Wadon led by resident recorder Robert Maidstone. The dull weather continued as we began our walk along the road toward the common.

Many plant galls were found here & with five of the group members of the British Plant Gall Society many eyes made light work. One of the first galls found was the Midge Gell *jaapiella veronicae* on *Germander Speedwell Veronica chamaedrys* which causes the terminal leaves to be thickened into a hairy pouch.

As we were graced with the presence of Rex & Barbara Hancy It was good to see the gall that inspired them into further study all those years ago.

Not far from here on *Salix sp* we found the rosette gall of the Midge *Rabdophaga rosaria*. The rest of the walk to the common was taken up with the plants. One such notable plant was the pink flowered form of the Hedgerow Bindweed *Calystegia sepium* forma *colorata*. Which is locally common here & mentioned in the current Norfolk Flora.

During an enjoyable lunch in the Village hall much discussion took place about Natural History and Rex remarked how pleased he was to see younger Naturalists taking on the study of plant galls.

After lunch the group shrunk to four members when we went to the Wadon village boundary with Long Stratton. We found a very good ditch here with signs of good water vole activity noted.

Along the Long Stratton bank of this ditch we found the sedge *Carex pseudoaxillaris* The hybrid sedge of False Fox Sedge & Remote Sedge *C. otrubae* x *C. remota*. This was considered a remarkable find in Norfolk. Near-by both parents were growing in profusion and as Rex said "They have been rather naughty."

Many thanks to Robert for such a good day.

Colin A Jacobs

SHELFANGER TOWN MEADOWS MEETING

11th June 2000

On a perfect summer day twelve members attended this meeting whose primary purpose was to study the vascular flora, with particular emphasis on grasses. The venue at Shelfanger was a long narrow stretch of unimproved grassland extending over 26 acres through which runs a tributary stream of the River Waveney. Much of the area is marshy and subject to seasonal flooding and is managed by the taking of a late hay cut each year. It has been an SSSI since 1988.

None of the participants had visited the site before and it was rapidly apparent that the plant communities present were quite exceptional. The first grass to attract attention was *Hordeum secalinum* (Meadow Barley), a species local in Norfolk. However, this was almost immediately overshadowed by the discovery of *Bromus racemosus* (Smooth Brome) in the damper areas and *Bromus commutatus* (Meadow Brome) on the periphery and drier parts. Thousands of plants of both species were present and the populations would repay study for the presence of intermediates, possible hybrids, which have been reported in the south and west of England where the species grow together (see P.M. Smith, *Watsonia* 9 pp. 326 - 328). Apart from three casual records in the west, the most recent at King's Lynn in 1993 by R.M. Payne, *B. racemosus* has never been discovered in Norfolk and escaped detection in the tetrad survey for *A Flora of Norfolk* published in 1999. The Shelfanger discovery is therefore one of major importance for the county.

One other noteworthy grass find was *X Festulolium loliaceum* (Hybrid Fescue), the sterile hybrid between *Lolium perenne* (Perennial Rye-grass) and *Festuca pratensis* (Meadow Fescue), most

often found in old pasture like that at Shelfanger where both its parents were present.

Leaving aside the grasses, members were particularly pleased to note four *Dactylorhiza* species, *D. fuchsii* (Common Spotted-orchid), *D. incarnata*, (Early Marsh-orchid), *D. maculata* (Heath Spotted-orchid) and *D. praetermissa* (Southern Marsh-orchid). Additionally the well-known population of *Persicaria bistorta* (Common Bistort) was much admired.

After lunch the party moved on to Boyland Common, shared between Shelfanger and Bressingham, an area of grazing land on acidulous to neutral or weakly basic soils. Only fruiting specimens of *Orchis morio* (Green-winged Orchid) remained, but there were many compensations. *Agrostis canina* (Velvet Bent) was just showing panicle and three species of *Juncus* growing in the proximity of one another, *J. effusus* (Soft-rush), *J. inflexus* (Hard Rush) and *J. conglomeratus* (Compact Rush), were compared. We were too early to find *Genista tinctoria* ssp. *tinctoria* (Dyer's Greenweed) and *Silau silaus* (Pepper-saxifrage) in flower, but saw vegetative material of both.

One interesting diversion on the common occurred when we interrupted a Small Copper butterfly (*Lycaena phlaeas*) laying an egg on *Rumex acetosa* ssp. *acetosa* (Common Sorrel), its food plant. Afterwards we examined the egg on the underside of a leaf, its sculpturing through a lens plainly apparent, making it look like a tiny golf ball.

Finally we looked at *Scandix pecten-veneris* (Shepherd's-needle) at the edge of a nearby wheat field and *Crepis biennis* (Rough Hawk's-beard), of which just two plants were growing on the road verge, one in flower and much photographed. The grass total for the day was 32 taxa.

The Society wishes to thank Mr W. J. Butler of Shelfanger Hall for allowing us to visit the Town Meadows site and Mrs M. Brown of Old Boyland Hall, Bressingham for granting permission to park cars on her land.

A. Copping

List of Grass Taxa Recorded Species seen at Boyland Common only are marked with an (*)

Festuca pratensis Meadow Fescue
**Festuca arundinacea* Tall Fescue
Festuca rubra ssp. *rubra* Red Fescue
X Festulolium loliaceum
Hybrid Fescue
Lolium perenne Perennial Rye-grass
Cynosurus cristatus
Crested Dog's-tail
Briza media Quaking-grass
**Poa annua* Annual Meadow-grass
Poa trivialis Rough Meadow-grass
**Poa pratensis*
Smooth Meadow-grass
Dactylis glomerata
Cock's-foot Grass
**Glyceria fluitans*
Floating Sweet-grass
Glyceria notata Plicate Sweet-grass
Helictotrichon pubescens
Downy Oat-grass
Arrhenatherum elatius
Fescue Oat-grass
Trisetum flavescens
Yellow Oat-grass
**Deschampsia cespitosa* ssp. *cespitosa* Tufted Hair-grass
Holcus lanatus Yorkshire Fog
Anthoxanthum odoratum
Sweet Vernal-grass
Phalaris arundinacea
Reed Canary-grass
Agrostis capillaris Common Bent
Agrostis stolonifera Creeping Bent (Vegetative only)
**Agrostis canina* Velvet Bent
Alopecurus pratensis
Meadow Foxtail
**Alopecurus myosuroides*
Black-grass
Bromus commutatus
Meadow Brome
Bromus racemosus Smooth Brome
Bromus hordeaceus ssp. *hordeaceus* Soft Brome
Bromus x pseudothominei
Lesser Soft Brome
Anisantha sterilis Barren Brome
**Elytrigia repens* ssp. *repens*
Common Couch
Hordeum secalinum Meadow Barley



MILLENNIUM MEETING

It was the intention of the Society to add a visit in the first year of the present millennium to its list of previous recorded field meetings to Heggatt Hall, Horsted, where the very first meeting of the Society had been held in 1869, as had the meetings for our 100th and 125th anniversaries. Unfortunately due to the restrictions caused by the recent Swine Fever outbreak in the county, it was not possible to follow in our footsteps of previous occasions due to the presence of a large number of pigs in the fields that we would have to cross.

We were, however, able to visit Burnt Wood on the opposite side of the estate, where our host had kindly enlarged a number of pathways in the wood which had become overgrown due to the wet weather in previous months.

On Sunday August 20th, a large party of members assembled in front of the Hall where we were welcomed by Mr. and Mrs. Richard Gurney who led us into a small dell in which grew a number of American Pokeweed *Phytolacca acinos* and also Deadly Nightshade *Atropa belladonna*. Emerging from the dell we were confronted with a Chinese Hankerchief tree *Davidia involucrata*, the leaves of which resemble large Lime tree leaves. Unfortunately the tree was not exhibiting the showy white bracts from which it takes its name.

We made our way along the public

footpath via a field of Flax that had seeded and was ready for harvest. The edges of the field were bordered with Wild Radish *Raphanus raphanistrum* the flowers of which were attracting various insects. Large White *Pieris brassicae* and Small White *P. rapae* butterflies. Hoverflies *Helophilus pendulus*, *Episyrphus balteatus* and *Syrphus vitripennis*. Plant Bugs *Scirpus bicolor* and Common Froghopper *Philaenus spumarius*. The hedge alongside the track was notable for its abundance of Spindle (*Euonymus europaeus*).

On entering the wood Mother of Pearl moths *Pleuropteryx ruralis* were disturbed from the nettles. A nest of the Common Carder Bumble Bee *Bombus pascuorum* had been exposed on the path by the tractor wheels but was still active. Green Shieldbugs *Palomena prasina* in various stages of growth were common along the paths. In the grassy areas Grass Moths *Crambus stramineella* and *Agriophila tristella* together with the Craneflies *Tipula paludosa* and *Nephrotoma submaculosa* took flight as we walked along, as did Speckled Wood *Pararge aegeria* butterflies and Silver-Y *Autographa gamma* moths. In cleared areas Hemp-nettle (*Galeopsis tetralix*). Climbing Corydalis (*Ceratocarpus claviculata*) and Wall Lettuce (*Mycelis muralis*) were among the less common species noted.

On reaching the sunny side of the wood Dragonflies were hawking, the Southern Hawker *Aeschna cyanea* and the Migrant Hawker *A. mixta*, one of which

Plant Gall list from Heggatt Hall

(Galls listed under host plants, inducers in brackets)

Acer pseudoplatanus (Sycamore)
Artactris cephalonea (mite)
Eriophyes pseudoplatani (mite)

Aesculus hippocastani (Horse chestnut)
Vasates hippocastani (mite)

Crataegus monogyna (Hawthorn)
Phyllocoptes gomothorax (mite)

Dryopteris spp. (Ferns)
Chirosia betulisti (fly)

Euonymus europaea (Spindle)
Eriophyes convolvens (mite)

Fagus sylvatica (Beech)
Hartigola annulipes (midge)
Eriophyes nervisequus nervisequus (mite)
Eriophyes nervisequus fagineus (mite)

Fraxinus excelsior (Ash)
Psyllopsis fraxini (psyllid)
Pseudomonas savastanoi var. *fraxini* (bacterium)

Galium aparine (Goosegrass)
Cecidophyes galii (mite)

Glechoma hederacea (Ground ivy)
Rondoniola bursaria (midge)

Ilex aquifolium (Holly)
Phytomyza ilicis (fly)

Prunus spinosa (Blackthorn)
Phytoptus similis prunispinosae (mite)

Quercus robur (English oak)
Andricus kollari (wasp)
Andricus fecundator (wasp)
Andricus anthracina (wasp)
Andricus lignicola (wasp)
Andricus quercuscalicis (wasp)
Andricus quercuscorticis (wasp)
Andricus quercusrostris (wasp)
Eiorhiza pallida (wasp)
Cynips divisa (wasp)
Cynips longiventris (wasp)
Cynips quercusfolii (wasp)
Neuroterus aliopeis (wasp)
Neuroterus numismalis (wasp)
Neuroterus quercusboaccarum (wasp)
Trioxa remota (psyllid)

Rosa spp. (rose)
Diplolepis rosae (wasp)

Rubus fruticosus (Bramble)
Dasineura plicatrix (midge)
Phragmidium violaceum (micro-fungus)

Stellaria holostea (Greater stitchwort)
Brachycolus stellariae (aphid)

Tilia sp. (Lime)
Phytoptus laiosoma (mite)

Veronica chamaedrys (Germander speedwell)
Jaapiella veronicae (midge)

Also recorded:
Periphyllus acercola, non-galling aphid on Sycamore

Rex and Barbara Hancy

The Christmas Crossword

Compiled by Bob Ellis

Across

7. *Chrysanthemum* ____, the corn marigold. (7)
8. ____ *dulcamara*, bittersweet. (7)
10. Could be sickle or bur. (6)
11. A resident woodland bird. (8)
12. Could be roseate or sandwich. (4)
13. *Leucanthemum vulgare*. (2-3,5)
14. A summer-visiting warbler. (11)
19. *Ligustrum vulgare*. (4,6)
22. A fruit. (4)
23. A type of carnivorous dinosaur. (8)
24. ____ *ficuloides*, water fern. (6)
25. A name sometimes given to the chough. (3,4)
26. ____ *speciosa*, yellow-oxeye. (7)

Down

- 1 A type of damselfly. (3-4)
- 2 In botany, a name often applied to the calyx and the corolla together. (8)
- 3 Could precede bee, wasp or pint. (6)
- 4 A concoction made from dandelions, for example. (4,4)
- 5 A common alien goose. (6)
- 6 ____ *pratensis*, devil's-bit scabious. (7)
- 9 An animal that feeds mostly on invertebrates. (11)
- 15 A culinary herb. (8)
- 16 Could be Scottish or bog. (8)
- 17 *Crassula* ____, mossy stonecrop. (7)
- 18 Could be hoary or moth. (7)
- 20 *Silene* ____, red campion. (6)
- 21 Used by fullers. (6)

kindly posed long enough for close examination. A few insects were swept from this area, the Mosquito *Aedes punctor*, Plant Bugs *Deraeocoris ruber*, *Calocoris norvegicans* and *Lyctocoris campestris*, Sawfly *Selandria serva*, Beetles 7-Spot Ladybird *Coccinella 7-punctata* and *Exochomus quadripustulatus* also a number of small flies *Opomyza germinationis*.

Tortoise beetles *Cassida rubiginosa* and their curious larvae were found on the Thistle leaves, where a male wasp *Cerceris rybyensis* was also resting.

In the afternoon a reduced party made a further excursion but the cloud had gathered and insects were scarce. The many Gatekeepers (*Pyronia tithonus*) noted earlier in the sunny glades were no longer to be seen, although we did find Heath Speedwell (*Veronica officinalis*) along a track not previously visited.

We were very thankful that the weather had held good for us on this occasion, also my thanks to those members that passed on their records for this report.

Ken Durrant

BRYOLOGICAL EXCURSIONS

Continued from page 6

Saturday 31 March: Swannington Upgate Common. Park on road side at TG142183.

Sunday 8 April: Scarning Fen & Rush Meadow.

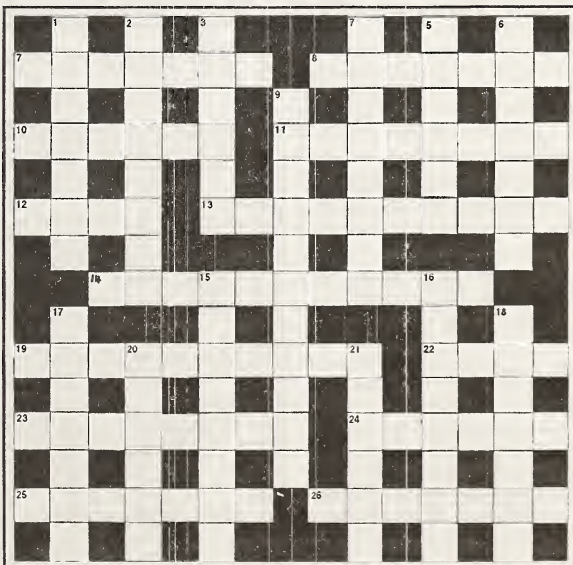
Parking at Scarning is difficult; best to park on verges at TF980123, before/after the bend in the road. For Rush Meadow, park at TG977136 by sewage works.

Saturday 28 April: Swanton Novers
Great Wood NNR. Meet at 'phone box in Swanton Novers village, TG020322. The warden, Robert Baker, will lead us into the wood.

Contacts:

Robin Stevenson,
College of West Anglia, Tennyson Avenue,
King's Lynn, Norfolk, PE30 2QW
Tel (01553) 761144 x 248, or
home (01553) 766788.

John Mott,
62 Great Melton Road, Hethersett,
Norwich, NR9 3HA. Tel (01603) 810442.



The Birds of Norfolk

Following the success of the initial publication of the book *The Birds of Norfolk* last October, a reprint containing some amendments and additional information, has now been published by Pica Press. This soft back version with a cover price of £25 is available from local bookshops and the Visitor Centres at the reserves of the Norfolk Wildlife Trust and RSPB at Cley, Holme, Hickling, Minsmere, Ranworth and Titchwell.

The royalties arising from the sales of the first edition totalled £4,100. This sum has been distributed to the RSPB for use on the Berney Marshes Reserve (£1,900), the Norfolk Wildlife Trust for its 'Securing the Future Appeal' (£1,900) and the How Hill Trust (£500).

It is hoped that buoyant sales of the reprint will result in further sums becoming available for conservation projects within Norfolk.

Moss Taylor (01263 823637)

Peter Allard (01493 657798)

Don Dorling (01603 810318)

PHOTOGRAPHIC GROUP

MEETINGS 2000 - 2001

Room 4 Easton College Leisure Centre 7.30 pm

Monday November 27

'Birds on the rocks'

Illustrated talk by Alan Dixon

Monday February 26

'Botswana and the Okavango Delta'

Illustrated talk by Hans Watson

Monday March 26

'A Fensman with a camera'

Illustrated talk by George Taylor,
NWT warden

A Flora of Norfolk

Last August I received a review of the 1999 'Flora'. The review was sent by Ryszard Ochrya, a Bryologist in the Institute of Botany, Polish Academy of Sciences, Cracow who had written the account in: 'Chronmy Przyrode Ojczysta' (Let Us Protect Nature in Our Homeland). Unfortunately it was all in Polish and meant little to me. I did, however, visit Poland later where a friend, Maria Nowak, translated the text into English for me. Copies of the translation have been sent to the authors of the 'Flora' and to 'The Norfolk Natterjack'.

Arthur Copping

Review Highlights

Situated in the south-east of England, Norfolk now has a marvellous new treatment of its vascular and bryophyte flora, thereby making it floristically one of the best documented parts of the British Isles. Not only has the county a tradition of botanical research stretching back

more than 200 years, but it is the birthplace of many eminent botanists who occupy an important place in the history of world botany.

Readers interested in the history of botany would do well to read A. Bull's well written account devoted to the botanists of Norfolk, which forms part of the introduction to the Flora.

The distribution maps for vascular plants have been compiled with the utmost accuracy, being based on a grid of two kilometre squares (tetrads). ...Numerous species are illustrated in excellent coloured photographs

The work has been expertly edited and superbly produced, so reading it is a pleasure indeed. Although its relevance to a Polish readership may appear slight, it serves well as a model for other local Floras, of which we are desperately short, instead of spending money on nature projects of dubious value. Polish botanists would be well advised to concentrate on producing such local treatises which have a lasting place in literature, rather than trivial accounts which end up as forgotten pieces of paper, gathering dust on the shelf of some local official.

Ryszard Ochrya

'An Evening in the Countryside'

Wed. 22nd November 2000

An evening event (7.30pm) at
The Playhouse, Norwich in aid of the
'We care 2000' Appeal

Presentation of slides followed by a question
and answer session featuring the EDP
nature correspondents:

Grace Corne - Rex Hancy

Moss Taylor - Percy Trett

Tickets £5 (cheques made payable to

We Care 2000 Appeal) call

01603-625321 or send SAE to

We Care 2000 Appeal c/o EDP,

Prospect House, Rouen Road,

Norwich, NR1 1RE.

Please submit your question when
applying for tickets

A note to CONTRIBUTORS.

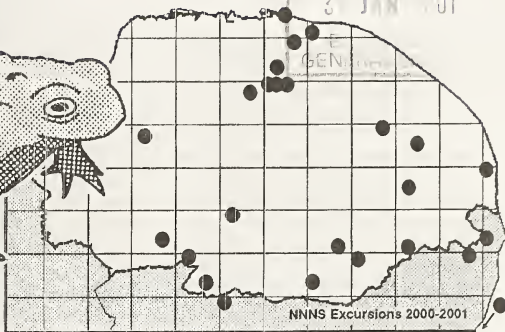
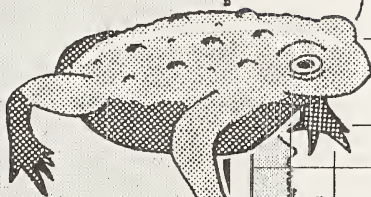
The next *Natterjack* will be in February. It would be much appreciated if any correspondence could be sent to the following address, as soon as possible by January 10th, and marked with NNNS on the envelope. For those with access to a computer a WORD document or an ordinary text file on disc would be most helpful, or you can send an e-mail to: francis.f@virgin.net

FF

Francis Farrow
'Heathlands'
6 Havelock Road
Sheringham
Norfolk
NR26 8QD



THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK



Toad-in-the-hole...

A belated 'Happy New Year' to all Society members and other readers. I trust the new 'Millennium' has started well. My thanks to all contributors, again a good selection, covering a variety of interests. If you are, however, desperate for Bob Ellis's excellent Christmas Crossword solution it can be found on the back page. Anne Brewster continues charting the Saxthorpe Clouded Yellows in the Northern Soya field and Geoffrey Kelly again puts us casual birders to shame. Thanks also to Garth Coupland's humorous contribution - does it remind you of anyone?

FF

Sign ...em up!

We have enrolled 36 new members into the Society in the year 2000, ranging from our youngest member (aged 16) to the venerable natural history library at Harvard University.

But, of course, every year we lose members, a few who, sadly, set off on the final field trip and others who don't renew their subscription, even after a reminder.

So here is your chance to help us recruit even more new members in 2001. With this *Natterjack* is a membership application form.

Many of you must have friends interested in natural history who would find in our meetings and excursions and publications a mine of useful information, not to mention the excellent company!

Even if you can't think of anyone at the moment, keep the form with you, in your car or tucked into your favourite field guide, and some time this year thrust it into the hand of a potential member and persuade them that they will receive a very warm welcome in the Society.

David Paull, Chairman,
Membership Committee

Congratulations to:



75 Years
Protecting Norfolk's Wildlife
1926 - 2001

YOUR COUNCIL

On the face of it, the Council of the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society is an unwieldy body; if all Vice-Presidents and representatives of other organisations were to attend there could be 38 sitting round a very large table at Easton College five times a year. In practice, attendance is usually about 25 and meetings hardly

ever last more than two hours, in part, due to a well-established structure of sub-committees. Twelve members of the Council are 'ordinary' members and hold no office. Of these, four are elected every year and each remains on Council for three years. I would always be interested to hear from anyone who might consider standing as such a member of Council.

Tony Leech

The quarterly bulletin
of the
Norfolk & Norwich
Naturalists' Society



Founded 1869
Registered Charity No. 29164

Number 72
February 2001

CLOUDED YELLOW SAXTHORPE DIARY

(see 'Natterjack' No. 71)

Sept 30 - 6 seen over bean field
Oct 4 - 6 seen between 12-12.45.
 None feeding. 2 chasing each other - brief sunny spells, windy.
Oct 6 - Sun shining but wind cold - visited site 10 - 10.30 - no butterflies seen. It had been a very cold night.
Oct 6-11 - Conditions not satisfactory - plenty of rain, wind and still cold.
Oct 13 - Hazy sunshine after foggy day. No butterflies seen.
Oct 15 - 1.45. Sunny and very light wind. 2 seen in 'weed' area. Rest of field not checked.
Oct 17/19/26 - Sunny but cold winds. No butterflies seen over field. Leaves now dying on bean plants.
Nov 1 - Richard Buxton, Park Farm, Heydon called at workshops. Remembers seeing 2-3 Clouded Yellows earlier this year. His beans have not yet been harvested owing to bad weather - recommended time mid-September. No butterflies seen.
Nov 4 - Sunny but cold light wind. No butterflies seen. Field also not harvested but most of the leaves now withered.

Anne Brewster

The Windmill

On 23rd November, 2000 at South Walsham I watched the delicate task of a large crane gently easing the buck into position on Richard Seago's postmill. All went well despite the rain in later stages. A great shame Michael was not there to see this historic event. He would I am sure, have been very proud.

Tony Howes



FUNGUS GROUP

A Norfolk Fungus Study Group has been set up with the joint aims of recording the distribution of the County's fungi and assisting members in the difficult business of identifying fungi. An enormous amount of recording has been done by Reg and Lil Evans, 'grand-parents' of the new Group, and one of our tasks will be to get these into the British Mycological Society's database, now accessible on the Internet. The Group levies a small subscription and is independent of other organisations but hopes to affiliate with the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society.



Further details can be found on the Group's web site:

<http://homepages.tesco.net/richard.shotbolt/nfsg>

or from: **Tony Leech**,
Group Organiser.

Earth Tongues

Walking to my local shop to collect the daily paper I noticed little black spikes sticking out of the grass on a lawn I pass by. Leaning over the wall I was able to see there were about 100 of a fungus known as Earth Tongues. Looking back to an article in 'Natterjack' (No. 68) by Tony Leech it appears that there are about a dozen species in Britain, mostly only distinguishable by their microscopic characteristics. I looked carefully at all the lawns that I passed on this half mile walk, but no more were found.

Tony Howes

Fungus Foray

The Meeting was billed as a Bird Of Prey Walk with the Suffolk Naturalists Society at Waveney Forest Fritton. TG 465011. on Saturday 11th November 2000. Although accepted as the northern most recording area of Suffolk it is also included in the Norfolk recording area. I think that this article will appeal to both county Naturalists.

Blustery south-westerly winds most certainly put down the raptors and whilst dodging rain showers we knew that the bird life would suffer.

Luckily we were able to spend the afternoon looking at the fungi present and although nothing unusual was found we did gather quiet a list in two hours.

Colin A Jacobs

Species present were:

Baeospora myosura
Boletus badius Bay Bolete
Clitocybe flaccida Tawny Funnel Cap
Clitocybe nebularis Clouded Agaric
Collybia butyracea Greasy Tough Shank
Collybia maculata Spotted Tuft Shank
Coriolus versicolor Many-Zoned Polypore
Crepidotus variabilis
Gymnopilus penetrans
Hygrocybe russocoriacea
Hypholoma fasciculare Sulphur Tuft
Laccaria laccata The Deceiver
Lactaria tabidus
Lycoperdon perlatum Common Puffball
Mycena alcalina The Bonnet
Paxillus involutus Brown Roll Rim
Pluteus cervinus Fawn Pluteus
Russula atropurpurea Blackish-Purple Russula
Russula emetica The Sickener
Russula ochroleuca Common Yellow Russula
Scleroderma citrinum Common Earth Ball
Stropharia aeruginosa
Stropharia aurantiaca
Tricholomopsis rutilans Plums & Custard

FUNGAL FIND

On March 18th 2000 I was crawling along the verge of a narrow lane in Wacton. As I scuffled about in the dead leaves and debris under some large hawthorn trees I noticed some small - about the diameter of a pencil lead - cup fungi sitting tight on the soil surface after I had scraped away the loose dead leaves. Each fungus was pale buffy brown and around the rim of the cup was a ring of inward pointing white hairs. They were spread about, singly or in pairs, and looked quite attractive but not worth collecting being so small (even big fungi are difficult with good books) and reasonably 'common'. Well, there were thirty or so in the area I had swept clean between my knees and the extended reach of my arms, so I crawled on.



A yard or so further on I cleared another patch of ground I noticed one of these fungi had been knocked out of the ground and had a long - about as long as a pencil thickness - stalk attached to a small clod of soil. Carefully I picked the fungus up by the lump of soil attached to the stalk but found the soil hard and unyielding instead of soft like the other clods, which seemed to be pieces of broken wormcasts.

A quick scratch with my thumb nail revealed the clod to be a half-decayed hawthorn berry with the fungus growing out from the stalk

end. Now a fungus with a specific host is easier to identify so I carefully dug up two or three more of these, with my pencil, (handy things pencils, I always keep one behind my ear, somewhere!) and found they all grew on old hawthorn berries. These fungi I took home and sent a couple to Reg and Lil Evans.

I duly received a reply informing me the fungus was called *Monilinia johnsonii* and has been rarely recorded in Norfolk, but more interestingly it is one of those fungi that have two distinct forms. One form occurs as dark brown or black patches on the leaves of hawthorn that produce spores like mildews and is the only form that has been recorded and appears to reproduce itself satisfactorily.

In the second form, the ascophore stage, the fungus generally undergoes a resting period and then produces what most people would recognise as a 'toadstool' fungus albeit in this case a 'cup' fungus. This 'double life' has resulted in both forms being separate names and much confusion to mycologists.

Robert Maidstone

OBSERVATIONS MADE IN MY GARDEN FROM OCTOBER 1st 1999 TO SEPTEMBER 30th 2000

The garden, at Old Catton, Norwich, has been chemical free for about 20 years. It is designed and planted to encourage native flora and fauna and is not large.

As is usual 34 species of bird have been recorded, but from having 32 pairs of nesting house sparrows in the 1960s, this 12 months has seen none.

The jays are very adaptable and clever. There is a log feeder by the bird table, suspended from a branch. This log has a compart-

ment drilled at each end and is filled with black sunflower seeds at one end and peanuts at the other. The jays fed regularly from the bird table, and then in early spring the male developed a new skill. Positioning himself on a nearby stout twig, he aimed himself like a missile at the log, snatching out a peanut and flying on to give it to his mate who hung about in a tall tree nearby. This became a common sight. Later, presumably having watched the tits feeding, he managed to hang upside down on the log and prize out nuts. Notably other birds do not resent or fear the jays who have raised 3 or 4 chicks this year.

A sparrowhawk has a taste for the garden's flock of collared doves, some 30 strong at present. I have never before seen a sparrowhawk mantling its prey except at raptor centre displays. This hawk performs on ours and the neighbour's lawn. Other birds are seldom attacked judging by the feathers found where the hawk has struck and de-feathered its prey.

Tawny owls have frequented and have nested in this garden or one nearby for at least 40 years. This year has seen stray visitors only, since the oak which they used, recently, has split at the crown. Formerly they nested in a cluster of 200 year old elms at the road end of the garden, along with some 52 pairs of rooks and jackdaws. Sadly all these were dispersed by the elms dying from elm disease.

Goldfinches - indeed a charm of them - visit the teasels but also display acrobatically on the lavender seed heads. I have been constrained by these beautiful birds to leave pruning back the lavenders until the spring.

Late flowering red hot pokers are a great attraction to blue and great tits, rather as to house sparrows in late summer, when

the sparrows were still here. My theory about the decline of house sparrows is that house roofs are no longer available for nests and winter roosting since most are sealed at eaves level and are also very cold because of thermal layers beneath the roofs and in lofts to prevent heat loss. Is there a special nestingbox for sparrows? I have never seen one.

Mosses and lichens have flourished in the 12 month period and have provided a new source of interest in what until recently, has been a dry garden. This has led to buying even more books for identification purposes.

Newts and frogs have increased in numbers and hibernation continues to be later than formerly. The great crested and common newts often hibernate between bricks on a terraced bank in the back garden. These bricks become ever more decrepit but cannot be discarded for the sake of the newts. Fortunately in early spring this bank is where the aconites, early crocus and snowdrops grow, so the bricks are generally well disguised.

As I write these notes, in November 2000, which is strictly in the next observation period, a goldcrest and long tailed tits are dancing through the trees and shrubs and the wrens are swearing at them.

Mary Manning

Tideline Corpse Surveys of the Past

During the opening years of the 1950's Two Lowestoft Field Club Members, Colin Ayers and the late Harold Jenner took part in a very important survey of the tideline corpses of birds. The survey would run from 1st October to 31st March & the pair would walk the beaches from Lowestoft to Gorleston once a week usually on a Sunday. They would diligently

Photo.
Francis Farrow



Ray's Bream - Sheringham 1978

record the dead birds and publish the results in the following year's annual report.

The 1951 report states 38 individual birds of eleven species were found during January 1st to March 31st. 17 of these were Common Scoter of which nine were found to be oiled.

The wind during October 1951 was predominantly in the east becoming westerly by early November. 216 birds of 35 species were found dead on the tideline. 87 Redwings, 15 song thrushes, Three Gannets and a Merlin were notable finds. Oiled birds found were the three Gannets along with one Herring Gull, four Razorbills and eight Guillemots.

The 1952 report informs readers that although there was no severe weather, 340 birds of 32 species were found. Typically in the October of that year fatalities were high with 28 Starlings, 61 Redwings and 56 Fieldfares were found.

As we know October is the peak period for avian passage, when Scandinavian passerines set out for the perilous cross over the North Sea. The mortality rate is commonly much higher in this month.

1953 the year of the great North Sea floods also produced 136 species including a Budgerigar!

At present the groynes along this stretch of coastline doesn't allow a good tideline, as most, if not all of the tideline corpses are being continually pushed back out with the tide. Colin is in his 60's now and he tells me that he often found

rare fish such as Ray's Bream washed ashore.

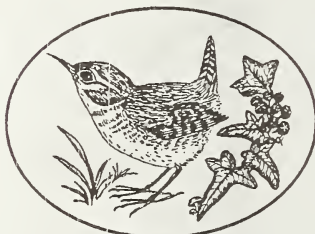
I have, during the winter of 2000 / 2001, walked this same stretch without finding any birds at all. But I will keep trying.

Colin Jacobs

House Visitor(s)

The item entitled "House Guests" in the November *Natterjack* prompts me to write about our visitor(s?).

Often, when our bedroom window is open, we have awoken to a wren singing on the windowsill before hopping inside to glean round the window frame, having checked the outside cobwebs around the window and on the thatch. We suspected that if the window was open more often, we may well have had a cock's nest, even a brood, in our bedroom.



Wren by Cherry Tancus

More recently, a wren came in through the back door and presumably got a shock when the ex-weaver nest that it investigated fell to the floor in our conservatory! It left its visiting card on an item of washing that was airing there!

Particularly in the autumn, our thatched roof and its invertebrate lodgers and cobwebs are very attractive to wrens, robins, great and blue tits. We often awake to watch them through the window.

Rowena Langston

Patience is a Virtue

During the British Plant Gall Society joint meeting with the Norfolk Naturalists' Society on Sunday August 13th 2000, at North Cove Suffolk Wildlife Trust Reserve, near Beccles, one of the group found a small Bug (Heteropteran sp.) settled on the stem of Common Reed *Phragmites australis*. By checking our field guides we were unable to determine the species but I had taken notes and was keen to identify it as soon as possible.

Unfortunately I went the other way and started to collect references on the Shield Bugs, which it looked like, and became annoyed that I was still unable to identify it.

Some three months later whilst attending an illustrated talk at a meeting of the Lowestoft Field Club One of the slides that came up was of a Ten-spot Ladybird *Adalia decempunctata*. But not, of course the text book individual but of a variable form with a yellow and green "Norwich City" colours around the edges of the wing cases. The rest of the back

was orangy brown in colour.

I knew that I would find the identification some how but little did I know how I would come across it. So in conclusion never give up the ghost. The answer is somewhere.

Colin A Jacobs

COLD COMFORT

A road close to my home in Thorpe St Andrew is planted both sides with Beech trees. For several years now during the winter months, and into the spring, it has been the practice of large numbers of Collared Doves to roost in these trees, by then of course completely bare of leaves. The doves can be seen clearly outlined against the sky as you walk along the path after dark. I have counted as many as 60 at one time.

The strange thing is that this species prefer dense conifers when nesting. There are plenty of these in the surrounding area, both garden varieties and those close by in Thrope Wood. So I wonder why they do not use them for roosting, they would provide far more protection and comfort during those bitterly cold nights.

As my old Grandfather used to say 'Thas a mistress Bor'.

Tony Howes



Fox Carcasses Wanted

As part of a three-year study at The University of Bristol I am collecting fox carcasses from across Britain to obtain information on the age, sex, diet, reproductive output and health of foxes in this country. This data will be used to look at regional differences in population structure and output.

I urgently need more fox carcasses for this, and would be very grateful for any assistance with carcass collection.

To help, simply pick up any fox carcass you find (providing it is fairly intact) and call me on the number below. I will then arrange for its immediate collection. The only information I need is the date and location (preferably including a six-figure OS grid reference) at which the carcass was found, and the cause of death (if known). I can provide heavy duty plastic bags for packaging of carcasses.



Please contact:

Charlotte Webbon
School of Biological Sciences
University of Bristol
Woodland Road
Bristol BS8 1UG
Email: C.C.Webbon@bristol.ac.uk
Tel: 0117 9287593

Shortly after receiving the above information I spotted a dead fox by the roadside at Bale and contacted Charlotte. She gets Parcel Force to collect - very efficient and it is nice to think of some scientific use being made of a roadkill.

Tony Leech

HOME BIRDS - 2000

Readers may recall that a list of birds recorded on, over or from my home at Frettenham (TG240171) during 1998, appeared in *Norfolk Natterjack* #64. During 2000, I again maintained a daily list. As in 1999, I actually managed to record on 343 days (2000, a leap year, having 366 in all). The 'blanks' were as follows: January 11; February 19, 27; March 22, 30; May 10, 29; June 21, 29; August 30; September 6, 7, 16; October 12; November 7, 9, 13, 15; and December 1, 4, 5, 6, 24. There were no blank days in April and July. In general, daily observations were gathered over periods of between one and six hours; two hours having been the average. The 2000 daily average of 22.7 species, compared with 20.2 in 1998, can generally be ascribed to a clear increase in the local population or presence of a number of highly visible species; particularly Cormorant, gulls, Red-legged Partridge and crows. Of the 74 species seen, 65 were also recorded in 1998.

In 2000, 25 species were observed in each month. Four more species, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Pheasant, Song Thrush and Red-legged Partridge, 'missed-out' only in February, November, November (again) and December, respectively.

Habitats visible from my vantage point include gardens, a small fish-pond, rough pasture, species-rich hedges, arable farmland, a worked-out chalk pit, partly used for landfill, and the Stone Beck valley, dividing Frettenham from Spixworth and Crostwick parishes.

The list provided is in ranking order, viz.: name and number of days - the suffix M meaning recorded in every month.

I trust that I will be able to carry out this exercise again in 2002.

Geoffrey Kelly

| | | |
|----|-------------------|------|
| 1= | Wood Pigeon | 343M |
| 1= | Starling | 343M |
| 3 | Blackbird | 342M |
| 4 | Collared Dove | 331M |
| 5 | Blue Tit | 324M |
| 6 | Stock Dove | 320M |
| 7 | Great Tit | 313M |
| 8 | Chaffinch | 308M |
| 9 | Magpie | 290M |
| 10 | Carriion Crow | 282M |
| 11 | Black-headed Gull | 281M |
| 12 | Dunnoek | 273M |
| 13 | Greenfinch | 271M |
| 14 | House Sparrow | 261M |
| 15 | Robin | 233M |

| | | |
|-----|----------------------|------|
| 16 | Rook | 231M |
| 17 | Mistle Thrush | 226M |
| 18 | Jay | 199M |
| 19 | Pied Wagtail | 190M |
| 20 | Jackdaw | 165M |
| 21 | Common Gull | 162M |
| 22 | Kestrel | 133 |
| 23 | Green Woodpecker | 128M |
| 24 | House Martin | 126 |
| 25 | Lesser B/B Gull | 125 |
| 26 | Swallow | 123 |
| 27 | Swift | 106 |
| 28 | Pheasant | 105 |
| 29 | Great B/B Gull | 103 |
| 30 | Wren | 96M |
| 31 | Song Thrush | 93 |
| 32 | Red-legged Partridge | 83 |
| 33 | Lapwing | 74M |
| 34 | Skylark | 72 |
| 35 | Turtle Dove | 69 |
| 36 | Yellowhammer | 66 |
| 37 | Goldfinch | 65 |
| 38 | Gt. Spotted W/pecker | 62 |
| 39 | Mallard | 58 |
| 40 | Cormorant | 51 |
| 41 | Redwing | 49 |
| 42 | Whitethroat | 43 |
| 43 | Sparrowhawk | 33M |
| 44 | Long-tailed Tit | 32 |
| 45 | Fieldfare | 28 |
| 46= | Blackcap | 21 |
| 46= | Coal Tit | 21 |
| 48= | Herring Gull | 16 |
| 48= | Cuckoo | 16 |
| 50 | Willow Warbler | 10 |
| 51= | Goldcrest | 7 |
| 51= | Linnet | 7 |
| 53 | Chiffchaff | 6 |
| 54 | Canada Goose | 5 |
| 55 | Sand Martin | 4 |
| 56= | Teal | 3 |
| 56= | Tawny Owl | 3 |
| 56= | Brambling | 3 |
| 56= | Bullfinch | 3 |
| 60= | Mute Swan | 2 |
| 60= | Barn Owl | 2 |
| 60= | Lesser Whitethroat | 2 |
| 60= | Spotted Flycatcher | 2 |
| 64= | Pink-footed Goose | 1 |
| 64= | Egyptian Goose | 1 |
| 64= | Shelduck | 1 |
| 64= | Marsh Harrier | 1 |
| 64= | Hobby | 1 |
| 64= | Golden Plover | 1 |
| 64= | Whimbrel | 1 |
| 64= | Green Sandpiper | 1 |
| 64= | Common Tern | 1 |
| 64= | Redstart | 1 |
| 64= | Reed Bunting | 1 |

FIELD & INDOOR MEETINGS
February - April 2001

- Rubber boots recommended.
- Rubber boots essential.

■ Sunday 4th March

Tyrell's Wood. 11.00 a.m. Full Day.
Directions: Meet in the Woodland Trust car park. TM205893.

This will be an introduction to mosses and liverworts. Tyrell's Woods is an old deciduous wood with varied soil types so there should be a good range of bryophytes. Leader: John Mott.

■ Sunday 1st April

Wayland Wood. 11.00 a.m. Full Day.
Directions: Meet in the NWT car park. TL923996.

If we are lucky, we may find the elusive Yellow Star-of-Bethlehem in flower at its only Norfolk site.
Leader: Paul Newport (the NWT voluntary warden).

INDOOR MEETINGS

To be held at Room 7, The Sports and Leisure Centre, Easton College, Easton, Norwich.
7.30 p.m.

Tuesday 20th February

THE PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS
Tim Peet

"Glittering prizes:
a natural history of Guernsey"

Tuesday 20th March

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Followed by "From gannets to albatrosses via volcanoes and glaciers" an illustrated talk on New Zealand by *Mike Poulton*.

Tuesday 17th April

"A celebration of the seasons: autumn"

A presentation to the main Society by the Photographic Group.

ADVANCE NOTICE

The first field meeting of the new season will be on Sunday 6th May at 11.00 a.m. - a full day at Sporle Wood (near Swaffham) by kind permission of Mr. Kilvert-Minor-Adams. Leader: Gillian Beckett. Meet on the beat pad at the end of the farm track that runs south from Sporle Road, Little Dunham. TF656122.

Bob Ellis, Chairman
Programme Committee

THE FIRST COUNTY FLORA

To produce a modern county flora is an enormous undertaking but imagine compiling one before the advent of identification guides or even Linnaeus's system of binomial nomenclature. Such was the achievement of John Ray whose *Catalogue Plantarum circa Cantabrigium nascentium* (Flora of Cambridgeshire) was published in 1660. Due to its rarity, and the fact that it is written in Latin, the original is inaccessible to most but in 1975 A. H. Ewen and C. T. Prime edited a translation which is still available*. The 146 page book includes a generous amount of background information but it is the 700 plus entries in the 'systematic' section which capture the browser's attention. Latin names (often polynomial) are arranged in alphabetical order and followed by Ray's vernacular name for the plant, the modern scientific name and the original comment on its distribution, often with specific localities. For those unfamiliar with Cambridgeshire the real joy of the book is in the notes appended to many of the entries. Whilst some of these are quotations from other authorities and refer to the plant's use (showing that Ray had not totally broken away from the herbals that preceded his innovative book), his own perceptive field-notes are even more interesting. I cannot imagine anyone interested in plants and their folklore not enjoying this gem.

Tony Leech

* From Mrs Frances Prime, Flat 13 Manor House, Attleborough Road, Hingham, Norwich NR9 4HP; price £5.50 including post and packing.

LORDS AND LADIES

Of the twenty-two titles in the New Naturalist Monograph series, only one, *Lords and Ladies* by Cecil Prime, ever featured a plant. The combination of such an intriguing species and a schoolmaster author who could meld together chapters on its folklore, ecology, uses and genetics generated what Peter Marren, in his more recent book on the New Naturalist series*, described as a '*smashing book, and we should be ashamed of ourselves for not buying it*'.

I first read the book just before going up to university and was inspired by it. I hope that it was the science that turned me on -



observations and investigations which were simple enough to be carried out by any amateur naturalist but which led to fascinating insights into the plant's

biology. But I am sure I was also captivated by accounts of its poisonous properties, its sinister manipulation of insect behaviour for its own sexual ends and, as a schoolboy, by the rudeness of many of its one hundred local names. The original monograph is now a collector's item and the 1981 reprint has long been remaindered but copies are still available from Dr. Prime's widow, Mrs Frances Prime, Flat 13 Manor House, Attleborough Road, Hingham, Norwich NR9 4HP for £8.00, including post and packing.

Tony Leech

* The New Naturalists, HarperCollins (1995)

The Flora of Roofs

Society member, Ron Payne, has set his sights higher. Following the successful publication of his 1998 *The Flora of Walls in West Norfolk* he has recently published a paper on flowering plants that grow on roofs. This subject - apparently a first in print - required the introduction of a suitable term (tecticolous) to denote roof-dwelling plants.

Although the modest paper covers the country, 90% of the records from the eight year study come from Norfolk. In all some 160 species of plant have been recorded growing in this very inhospitable man-made habitat. The 'habitat' section not only discusses roofs but also pays particular attention to thatch and pill-boxes. *The Flora of Roofs*' is a 22-page paper and comes bound in an attractive coloured cover depicting House Leeks in flower on an asbestos roof.

If I should have any criticism it would certainly not be on subject matter but the misspelling of my name! Having said that it is a booklet that can, and I am sure will, have a few botanists looking up instead of down this year.

The paper is available at a cost of £3.00 (including postage) from Mr. R.M. Payne, 'Applegate', Thieves Bridge Road, Watlington, King's Lynn, Norfolk, PE33 0HL.

Francis Farrow



Dear Natterjack Readers,

**Photography Group
Slide evening
23 October 2000**

Having been an (albeit very dormant) member of the NNNS for many years, I recently re-awakened, and one of the first meetings I attended was the above slide evening. As an amateur photographer myself, I was delighted that I had gone along. The standard of photography was (as I had expected) high, with just discernible differences between those who were, say, botanists first and photographers second, and others who were photographers first and perhaps entomologists second.

I came away with the feeling that it was just a crying shame that very few non-photographer members had come along, because they missed many images that were inspirational - not only to other photographers, but to anyone with an interest in natural history.

As an objective observer, please do consider my recommendation to go to any other such evenings which may be arranged in future.

Jane Cushman

**Christmas Crossword
Solution**

ACROSS

7. SEGETUM
8. SOLANUM
10. MEDICK
11. NUTHATCH
12. TERN
13. OX-EYE DAISY
14. WHITETHROAT
19. WILD PRIVET
22. PLUM
23. ALLOSAUR
24. AZOLLA
25. SEA CROW
26. TELEKIA

DOWN

1. RED-EYED
2. PERIANTH
3. CUCKOO
4. ROOT BEER
5. CANADA
6. SUCCISA
9. INSECTIVORE
15. TARRAGON
16. ASPHODEL
17. TILLAEA
18. MULLEIN
20. DIOICIA
21. TEASEL

**PHOTOGRAPHIC GROUP
MEETINGS 2001**

Easton College Leisure Centre
7.30 pm

ROOM 4

Monday February 26

**'Botswana and the Okavango
Delta'**

Illustrated talk by Hans Watson

This is not one to miss. Hans is a very good naturalist and excellent wildlife photographer. He will take us round this remarkable area right in the heart of Africa, showing some of the animals and birds that live there.

Monday March 26

'A Fensman with a camera'

Illustrated talk by George Taylor,
NWT warden

George spends his working hours out in the Fens. He is in daily contact with the 'great outdoors'. He will share with us some of his vast experience working in an environment most of us only dream about.

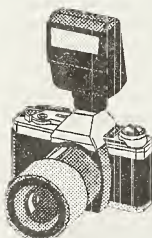
ROOM 7

Tuesday April 17

**'A Celebration of the Seasons:
Autumn'**

Photographic Group Lecture

This annual event gives the society photographers an opportunity to show us their work based on a theme. Last year we saw the glories of Summer, this time Autumn will be the subject. The season of mellow fruitfulness, mists, damp leaves etc., you can almost smell the richness of it all. Come and see how a camera can be used almost like an artists brush, creating works of art.



**Norfolk Wildlife
e-mail discussion group**

For those Norfolk wildlife enthusiasts who have access to the net (not the one you catch insects with - the other one!), here's an invitation to join a newly set-up discussion group, Norfolk Wildlife. The idea is that if you have any comments, questions, recent sightings or amusing anecdotes with relevance to any sort of wildlife in the county then you send an e-mail to the group. Everyone else in the group then receives that e-mail and can reply or not as they wish. You can either choose to receive all e-mails as soon as they are sent or receive a daily digest of the day's messages. The group is absolutely free to join and you can leave the group at any time you wish.

The group is similar to those set up at a national scale for discussion of various topics (e.g. there is one concerned with UK Moths) but it is hoped that a more local group will be of interest. The more people who get involved, the more useful the group will hopefully become. You don't have to be an expert (although a few would be useful!), just to have an interest in Norfolk's wildlife. The group is moderated by Andy Musgrove (who works at the British Trust for Ornithology in Thetford although the group is not a BTO project).

If you think you'd be interested then please e-mail Andy at:
andy.musgrove@bigfoot.com.

A note to CONTRIBUTORS.

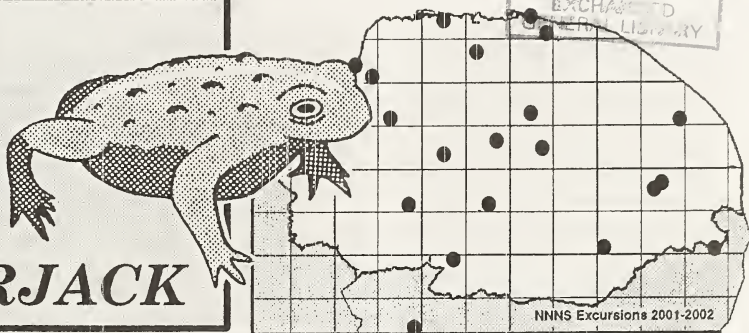
The next *Natterjack* will be in May. It would be much appreciated if any correspondence could be sent to the following address, *as soon as possible* by April 1st, and marked with NNNS on the envelope. For those with access to a computer a WORD document or an ordinary text file on disc would be most helpful, or you can send an e-mail to: francis.f@virgin.net

FF

Francis Farrow
'Heathlands'
6 Havelock Road
Sheringham
Norfolk
NR26 8QD



THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK



Toad-in-the-hole...

As I write this column we are approaching Easter and there is a relaxing of the restrictions in the countryside imposed by various bodies as a protection measure against the current foot and mouth outbreak. Although it is to be welcomed that as naturalists we can once again access our favourite haunts, we should not become complacent, but take what care we can when out and about. Not everything is 'back to normal' and the situation may be different by the time you read this. Please check with organisers if you are not sure that a planned event is taking place. In this edition of 'Natterjack' there are various contact numbers available including the NNNS website.

Unfortunately we have 'lost' the Royal Norfolk Show which saw our debut as exhibitors last year. Alternative venues have been investigated but as yet there are no firm details as to which shows will actually take place. In the meantime investigations within the garden can prove fruitful as many of the contributions to this Bulletin show. My thanks to those that have sent material and please let's have more for August. By the way we are told that 'one swallow doesn't make a summer' but I saw my earliest to date on 31st March at Sheringham.

FF

WELCOME BACK DAVID

After accepting nomination at the last minute, David Paull was elected, unopposed, at the AGM as chairman of the Society. David modestly pretends to know little of natural history but is an experienced chairman, having been at the helm from 1997 to 2000. In addition, he has nobly agreed to continue as chairman of the membership committee, good news as he has enrolled no fewer than 36 new members over the last year. Retiring chairman Keith Clarke had only agreed to a single year of office and was

warmly applauded for discharging his duties with a gentle hand and much humour.

Three new members of Council were elected to maintain the quota of non-officers at twelve. Two of these, Colin Penny and Rosemary Carpenter, have served previously but Alan Dixon comes aboard as the new boy. We bid farewell to David Nobbs, Tony Howes and Tony Brown all of whom have made significant contributions during their three-year stint on Council.

Tony Leech (Hon. Sec.)

NNNS PROGRAMME

2001-2002

You should have received the new programme card with this edition of *'The Norfolk Natterjack'*.

Please note that some meetings may well be affected by the Foot and Mouth restrictions. If in any doubt, please check with the

leader of the meeting or Stephen Martin (01603 810327) or Bob Ellis (01603 662260) a few days before the event. We will also endeavour to post relevant information on the web site at:

www.paston.co.uk/users/golds/nnnshome.html

See also page 6 regarding the wild/lower field days

The quarterly bulletin
of the
Norfolk & Norwich
Naturalists' Society



Founded 1869
Registered Charity No. 291604

Number 73
May 2001

Island Inspiration

I would be the first to admit that I am an infrequent visitor to meetings of the society, more likely to be seen on an excursion than at a lecture. However, with distant memories of a day trip to Guernsey on my honeymoon 21 years ago whilst staying on Jersey, I travelled to Easton College on February 20th for this year's Presidential Address, Tim Peet's presentation 'Glittering Prizes: a natural history of Guernsey'.

Our visit to Guernsey all those years ago had relatively little natural history content and I now realise that we did indeed miss some glittering prizes, but perhaps honeymoons are not the place for that sort of activity.....

Our intention to re-visit has been heightened by the delights Tim Peet shared with us, timed, of course, to see not only the albino Early Purple Orchids but also the swathes of Lax Flowered Orchid in the meadows owned by the local society. It is now apparent that there are so many other reasons for going that one visit may not be enough!

Tim Peet's modesty could not hide his vast knowledge of Guernsey, interspersing natural history attractions with geography, history and local anecdotes, all delivered with humour and an obvious respect for the island. Whilst appreciating that Guernsey, at only about 45 square miles, is not a large area of study compared to, say, Norfolk, I was left wondering how many of us knew a similar sized area so intimately - perhaps even the parishes we live in?

Many areas of interest were covered; both flowering and flowerless plants; butterflies and

moths; birds; and mole crickets, which I now know how to eradicate, if they should ever present a problem when growing my Jersey Royal potatoes under glass!

We could not fault the presentation and found it ending all too soon. The Society is surely fortunate in having Tim Peet as not only a member but also a benefactor and President. His views on natural history are refreshing in their common sense and apparent lack of elitism. I am sure it is through such people, who know their areas of study well, that the correct way forward for habitat and species conservation will be found.

On leaving Easton College I felt I had not only been informed, but both entertained and inspired. If so much could be done on a small island where the pressure on available land for development and agriculture is so high (the geographical limits being apparent), what strides could be achieved in Norfolk where there is still, at the moment, space to breathe.

Pressures on our wonderfully diverse county are increasing untempered by ineffectively applied protective legislation. Our society should be in a position to influence that change, in a metered and planned way, rather than simply witnessing and recording declines.

If I had one criticism, it is not of the lecture itself, but the overriding impression it left me with. The local society on Guernsey not only studies natural history, it seems to be interested in integrated aspects of the life and history of the island; its members also work hard on managing sites, and have raised enough money to build its own headquarters in partnership with another body.

It matters little how well read we

are, how much research we conduct, or the papers we write, can we really call ourselves 'naturalists' if we do not get out there and get ourselves dirty, spending time improving habitats and, very importantly, fight to maintain the diversity of natural life? Research has its place, but it cannot clear scrub, dig out scrapes, rebuild hibernation tunnels, or influence development in this county with so much to treasure. I feel it is really the 'doing' that makes the difference in this life and certainly on Guernsey they appear to be "dewin' wholly well".....

Sue Goldsmith

Wight - The Isle of Yesteryear

Last Autumn Wendy and I spent a week on the Isle of Wight, our first visit - it was like the Norfolk of my youth. Not much traffic, even main roads had little in the way of heavy vehicles, it was so peaceful and quiet.

We had a cottage near the beautiful village of Godshill. All around was abundant wildlife, large flocks of finches on the stubble fields, House sparrows were chirping all around the buildings. Red squirrels were seen, the first wild ones for twenty five years. On two occasions we saw Humming Bird Hawk moths, both were feeding on flowers in private gardens. There was a Badger set in the woods behind the cottage, and the calls of Rook and Jackdaw echoed over the land all day long.

The downland looked very inviting, and I could imagine in high summer those grassy slopes being alive with flowers and Butterflies. Truly a magical place and one we shall return to in the future.

Tony Howes

Garden Birds

Geoffrey Kelly's previous list of birds seen from his house at Frettenham inspired one of us (Rita Bull) to follow suit during 1999. We had always kept a song chart, and by always, I am looking back to the late 1940s, so this did not entail a great deal extra, though it was found that not all birds heard singing were actually seen every day, so the number of bird species in the garden was probably higher on many days than the actual list.

The list was actually started on March 1st 1999 and with an 8 day period missed in late June gave a maximum possible of 298 days. During 2000, the maximum number of days was 366. We do not have the advantage of near neighbour's gardens to draw birds in, the nearest being about 400m distant. On either side we have arable. We have an orchard with an area of mixed evergreens at the top and beyond that a hedged section of former road and about two acres of mixed hardwoods planted about 18 years ago. There is a good garden area with trees and shrubs and a very small pond which attracts newts and also frogs to hibernate but not breed. Below the house is about an acre of sheep grazed pasture and then a Poplar plantation and joining it an area of rough marsh, then the River Tud and beyond this an amenity area with a very nice pond dug about 20 years ago.

Until 1995 we had grazing land with cattle on one side of us, and until that time we had up to four pairs of Starlings nesting under the roof every year and possibly as many as a dozen pairs of House Sparrows, though these latter had already started to decline before the cattle went. Until that time, however, both would have been in the

'top ten' seen every day. As it is, seven of our top ten in both years were the same as Geoffrey Kelly's. The three not in were Collared Dove 15th with 226 in 1999 and 16th with 250 in 2000 and Stock Dove with 189 in 1999 in 17th place and 14th in 2000 with 290. Starling however was only 24th with 123 in 1999 and 26th with 105 in 2000, and most of these sightings would have been simply flying over.

Our top ten had 9 species the same in both years, with Carrion Crow pushing Pheasant lower down the scale in 2000. The three species which replaced those above in Geoffrey Kelly's list were Robin with only one day missed in two years, Dunnock 9th on 285 in 1999 and first equal with 366 in 2000, and Greenfinch recorded every day in both years.

Others much reduced by comparison, House Sparrow 22nd with 134 in 1999 and 28th with 86 in 2000. Ours are visitors from that nearest house. Especially also, Skylark which has practically disappeared locally. 40th with only 47 sightings in 1999 and in 2000, 59th with only 4 sightings all year, and not even singing within earshot.

Silent Spring? Very nearly!

Alec and Rita Bull.



ARE WE

INADVERTENTLY KILLING OUR GARDEN BIRDS?

As a veterinary pathologist with many years experience of diseases of birds (both wild and captive), I should like to draw to the attention of people who feed garden birds the dangers of causing them fungal infections. It is not a good idea to fill up and particularly top up, peanut holders, especially during periods of wet weather, because the nuts quickly absorb moisture.

This encourages the growth and multiplication of fungi that are capable of causing disease in birds. Damp nuts tend to stick to the bottom of peanut holders and go mouldy. All food containers should be regularly and thoroughly cleaned, sterilised with boiling water and stale food removed from feeding areas. It is advisable not to feed birds continuously in the same place, unless food containers are situated over a concrete area that can be scrubbed and disinfected, thus helping to prevent the spread of infectious agents. Contrary to a statement in a document recently circulated by the RSPB, slightly mouldy bread should NEVER be fed to birds. Indeed, stale bread that appears not to be mouldy can still harbour fungi not visible to the naked eye. The RSPB has informed me that action will be taken to correct this statement.

Food for birds should always be provided in small amounts at a time and not be replenished until everything has been eaten. This also helps to prevent the spread of other diseases such as salmonellosis.

Dr Ian F. Keymer.

VISITING COUPLES

The Norwich residential suburb of Eaton Rise is located adjacent to the Yare Valley and bound around two sides by a golf course and copses which have grown out of marl pits.

The writer's garden abuts on to the golf course from which interesting species of wildlife traffic. Highlights of such visitors in this past month have been a pair - dog and vixen - of fox and a pair of muntjac deer. The fox visit occurred around 09:30 hours and they both came within five yards of our lounge windows. The physical condition of both animals appeared to be quite splendid. After an investigation of the garden over a period of about three minutes they then moved at great speed into a neighbours garden. The strong urine scent these animal left behind was to be preferred to any domestic feline!

The muntjac pair - male and female - have become very regular visitors (between 07:00 and 09:00 hours usually). These, unfortunately, we must restrain from entry since they browse on the emerging and more tasty leaves and shoots of numerous plants including bluebells, crocus, kniphofia, bergenia etc.

The bird life to be seen is a continuous source of interest. All three species of woodpeckers are seen, a sparrowhawk clobbering a wood pigeon, daily close ups of families of jays and magpies, pairs of bullfinches, goldcrests and nesting of robin, blue tit, great tit, song thrush, collared dove, blackbird and long-tailed tit.

It was with sorrow and anger that we noted the destruction of the nest of a long-tailed tit bearing nine eggs - probably by a neighbours

cat. The building of the nest of the long-tailed tit in a berberis some three yards from our lounge window, had occupied our delighted attention over a period of about a month. The beautiful nest structure was dragged out of the bush and the eggs left uneaten below.

Grass snakes - pairs we presume - have been observed near the compost heaps whilst their egg shell and very young grass snakes have been seen near this compost.

It is possible that at some future date our members will read in this publication 'Garden for Sale with House included'.

Gordon Livingstone

THE LITTLE FELLOW

For the last two weeks Wendy and I have travelled most days to see her sick father at Addenbrooks Hospital in Cambridge.

Some of the route passes through the Brecks, so when Wendy was driving I have been looking out for deer. Only two Roe have been seen so far and one Red but the tiny Muntjac (*Muntiacus reevesi*) seems very numerous. Often a count of six seen on one journey, usually just a few yards into the woodland, even travelling at seventy m.p.h. the eye can pick them up fairly easily. Based on these sightings and those nearer home this small deer must be well established in Norfolk and Suffolk woodlands at the moment, probably our most numerous species now. We often see them in the mixed woodland at Thorpe, especially where bramble and low scrub abounds.

Apparently all these animals are descendants from a few escaped from Woburn Park in Bedfordshire. The male has small antlers but long canines that make it look a bit like Christopher Lee on a bad day.



When disturbed they often give a sharp bark of alarm. I would not imagine that they do much damage as they seem to eat mostly low shrubs and bramble leaves. I find these animals a pleasing addition to our woodlands.

Tony Howes
March 2001

50 Years Ago

An extract from the NNNS
Transactions of 1951

BANANA SPIDER

A female of the large poisonous spider *Ctenus forus* (Perty) was found with bananas in a Norwich warehouse in May, 1951. It produced an egg-cocoon in July and the young emerged in great numbers early in September, after which they were deposited at London Zoo. This species has been recorded as native in Brazil and Paraguay.

R.M. Barnes

Missing 'Squiggle' FUNGUS STUDY GROUP

According to my copy of the Little Oxford English Dictionary the word 'squiggle' denotes:

- a) wavy or curly line
- b) wriggle

I expect by my omission of a) from the last 'Natterjack'. I caused b) as frustrated attempts by members to log on failed!

My apologies to those of you who suffered from the missing squiggle (insert before richard) Please find the correct version of the Fungus Study Group site below:

<http://homepages.tesco.net/~richard.shotbolt/nfsg>

I have tried it and it does work!

FF
Editor

AN APPROPRIATE HOST FOR JEW'S EAR

The Jew's-ear fungus must be familiar to almost all naturalists; it is common, distinctive and has a vernacular name which - at least as far as the ear part is concerned - is appropriate. It can be eaten, although not strong in the flavour department, and has a long history of use in Chinese traditional medicine and in Western herbal treatments (for the usual wide range of unconnected conditions).

Its normal host is elder on which its pinkish-brown gelatinous lobes can be found at any time of year. This is the association which explains the name of the fungus



(a mistranslation of the mediaeval Latin, *auricula Judae* - Judas's ear) for on this tree Judas Iscariot is said to have hanged himself. The scientific name of the fungus reinforces this with *Auricularia* (a little ear) *auricula-judae*.

Another legend has it that Judas hanged himself not on elder but on *Cercis siliquastrum*, known, in his honour, as the Judas-tree. This member of the pea family sprouts clusters of pink flowers directly from the bark and is commonly grown in gardens but, like elder, occurs naturally in western Asia.

Jew's-ear fungus is, in fact, quite catholic in its tastes, occurring on, amongst other woody hosts, sycamore, ash, oak, elm, willow, beech, hazel, and alder. In a study in the north-east, only 62% of the finds were on elder, with 20% on sycamore, 9% on wych elm and the remainder on five different species. Nevertheless it came as a surprise when a friend recently presented me with a piece of a Judas-tree branch bearing a Jew's-ear fungus.

Tony Leech

Although not such an appropriate host as the above I recently found Jew's-ear on another plant other than Elder - an old woody Buddleja trunk in the garden.

FF

A not so common 'Grey Mould'

During a spate of correspondence about snowdrops on the Norfolk Wildlife e-groups I remembered seeing a grey mould on some snowdrop plants that I had been moving around in a garden at Tibenham earlier this year.

I had found the mould in the centres of the largest and densest clumps of snowdrops. It was attacking the base of the leaves causing them to rot off at ground level.

I had thought little about the mould at that time, just throwing the affected bulbs away and replanting the rest. I had assumed that it was the common grey mould that attacked many species of plants in the garden.

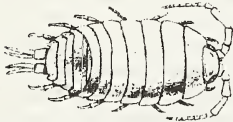
However, on checking in Ellis & Ellis 'Microfungi on Land Plants' I found the mould was *Botrytis galanthina*, a species specific to snowdrops. They suggest this species is found predominantly in northern England but since I can remember seeing it in several other gardens locally over the years I wondered how common it really was - so I looked on the British Mycological Society website. On their species database they had recorded - three records!

Maybe those 'stay-at-home' naturalists amongst us could be making as good a contribution to wildlife recording as those who spend half the day travelling to the wilderesses of Norfolk.

Robert Maidstone

SLATER DAY

With the current restrictions on visiting the countryside, I have been turning my attention more to what is still accessible - in my case, the sea and beach. I visit the Quay here at Wells regularly, and occasionally you get a "Slater day". The Sea Slater *Ligia oceanica* is a very large woodlouse, sometimes 50mm long, but of the same shape and proportions as the familiar woodlice of the genera *Oniscus* and *Porcellio*. Being inhabitants of rocky coasts, they are not exactly common in Norfolk. I imagine they must always be here on the Quay, but you only see them in particular weather conditions, basically dull and damp. Even then you can't rely on their being around, but when they do appear it can be in impressive numbers.



The large Victorian dressed stones forming the quay edge, and especially the cracks and gaps between them, are presumably the slaters' home, but they are truly amphibious, apparently happy to be crawling on the "rocks" or swimming nearby. I like them; they seem as truly inhabitants of the quay as the gulls, swans and mallards, and the Turnstones which now regularly appear in winter - up to 19 on one day this year, by the way. If any of you have come across Sea Slaters elsewhere in Norfolk, I should be interested to hear. Strangely enough, I have never seen one at West Runton, our nearest approach to a rock-pool coast.

Paul Banham

THE SQUEALER

Thirty odd years or so ago I had permission to walk and birdwatch over a farm at Postwick in the Yare Valley. Part of this walk involved the twenty yard buffer zone of willow scrub and sedge between the river and the grazing marshes. I remember well that Water Rails (*Rallus aquaticus*) were a common sight and sound in those days, the pig like squeal would often erupt from the margins of the swamp ahead as I walked through the tangle of bushes and sedge.

This was brought home to me last week when I walked round Strumpshaw Fen late one evening. Suddenly there it was - that peculiar high pitched, injured pig like squeal, followed by a few low grunting sounds, they were coming from an overgrown sedge and reed bed. I stopped and listened a few minutes and there it was again, it brought back memories of those nearby trips many years before.

You can imagine primitive peoples hearing this blood curdling sound coming from the swamps as they passed by, They would probably pull their cloaks a little bit tighter as they cast a nervous glance in that direction and hurried on their way, fearful of the "Swamp Devils" that lived there.



Tony Howes
February 2001

Know that Wildflower?

The Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society has arranged a series of four field meetings over the spring and summer designed as an introduction to the identification of wild flowers. They are open to members and non-members of the society but the aim is to encourage as many people as possible to attend, not only 'beginners' and those 'starting out', but also those botanists who have experience and knowledge that they would like to share.

Enclosed with this issue of *Natterjack* is a leaflet giving details of all the times and venues, so please make a note in your diary and then pass the leaflet on to anyone that you think may be interested, or pin it up in your workplace, library, school, college etc. The first meeting is scheduled for Sunday 13th May, at 10.30 am at Foxley Wood NWT reserve. In view of the uncertainty over access due to foot & mouth restrictions, there will be an answerphone message on 01263 587 499 from Monday 7th May onwards giving an update on access (and possibly an alternative venue; similar messages will be posted, if necessary, in the week before the following meetings).

Simon & Anne Harrap



Stigmella aurella in Norfolk (The Bramble Pigmy)

All records please to:
Jon Clifton, Kestrel Cottage, Station Road,
Hindolveston, Norfolk, NR20 5DE.
jon.clifton@btinternet.com

One of Norfolk's most widespread moths is the Nepticulid leaf mining moth *Stigmella aurella*, but a quick look at the attached distribution map shows that there have been very few records sent in, so may I ask any recorders to submit their sightings to me at the address above (and I will forward them to our county recorders).

The larva of *Stigmella aurella* mine the leaves of bramble in a long and twisting whitish gallery which is very distinctive and noticeable. It is thought to be continually brooded so can be seen throughout the year,



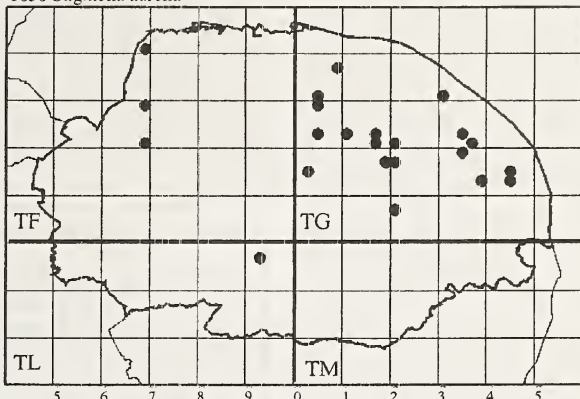
especially in the evergreen varieties, so its presence can be found with ease. I found this was just the case while on

the way home from work. In just two days stopping the car in a different 2km grid square near a patch of bramble and on inspection I had found the mines within seconds.... its as easy as that! (you can see where I live by looking at the map!) you have probably got it in your garden so go out and look.

The only other species to watch for on bramble that feed in this way are *Emmetia marginea* but its mine is whiter and broader than *S. aurella* and *Stigmella splendissimella* which usually prefer dewberry to bramble, so in winter this is no problem as dewberry are deciduous and will not be present.

Jon Clifton

0050 *Stigmella aurella*



Blackbird Delight!

It's 6am on a grey and drizzly morning but I'm full of the delights of Spring! For the third morning in a row I have been woken up early by the Blackbird singing just outside the bedroom window. What a marvellous way to start the day! I don't mind that it's early and I could have had another hours sleep at least! At this time of the year like so many of us, I am looking forward to hearing the first Chiff-Chaff, Willow Warbler, Blackcap etc., but the lovely mellow sound of the Blackbird to me is Spring at it's best!

What a great English sound that is! I just had to get up and tap this out to express my delight. Whilst I waited for the kettle to boil for the inevitable cup of tea I had a look out of the back door to be greeted by the Song Thrush singing from nearby. What more do you need!!! As always this Spring I have waited to record the first Chiff Chaff etc: (Chiff-Chaff: 23.3.01; Willow Warbler 5.4.01; Blackcap: 6.4.01.) but the Blackbird "insists" on being recorded!

Roger Clarke



P.S. If you fancy taking part in a newt survey - see back page

Newts on South Norfolk Commons

A biodiversity project focussing on the common lands of South Norfolk is being proposed by a partnership that includes Norfolk Wildlife Trust, English Nature and South Norfolk Council. Details on this project will be circulated to other prospective partners in the near future and a scoping is planned for the coming months. Amongst the information needed to inform the project, is a better idea of the distribution of great crested newt on the South Norfolk Commons. Funding for this part of the project has been kindly offered by the Herpetofauna Conservation Trust.

The proposal, at present, is to survey ponds on South Norfolk Commons in the spring and early summer of this year. If you are interested in taking part in the South Norfolk Commons survey work, and being a part of the volunteer survey team, then please contact me.

Helen Baczkowska,
Biodiversity Project Officer,
Norfolk Wildlife Trust.
Tel: 01603 625540

THE LAST GUARDIAN



With Billy Bishop (Cley), Ted Eales (Blakeney Point) the name Bob Chestney (Scolt Head) was synonymous with wild birds and their early protection along the north Norfolk coast for many of us. Their annual bird summaries as respective wardens were regular features of the *Bird and Mammal Reports* of the 50s and 60s.

It was, therefore, with sadness that I read in the *Eastern Daily Press* of the death of Bob Chestney on March 31st, aged 75.

Bob Chestney was unforgettable - the first sighting was usually of this wind burnt red-brown character in shorts and wild hair appearing through the dunes and coming up to enquire what you were about. Having satisfied himself that you were not going to harm *his* birds he settled into jovial mood and a teller of tales - some of the rather tall variety!

During an NYN excursion in 1969 Bob regaled the young nats with stories of the 1953 flood and how afterwards the samphire had to be carried over the shoulder as it was the size of a small Christmas tree!

My visits to Scolt over the years have regrettably been infrequent yet I will not forget those early days watching the Sandwich Terns and hearing their raucous calls over the wind, whilst listening to Bob's tales. He was a countryman, a naturalist who inspired and above all a true guardian of our natural heritage. Long may we remember him as the man of Scolt Head and its terns.

Francis Farrow

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

Members who pay by cheque are reminded that subscriptions fell due on 1 April, 2001. Current rates are £12 for ordinary and family members and £15 for affiliated groups. Please make cheques payable to Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society and send them to the Treasurer:

DI Richmond,
42, Richmond Rise,
Reepham,
Norfolk, NR10 4LS.



Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society subscription form:

From:.....

Address:.....

.....

.....

A note to CONTRIBUTORS.

The next *Natterjack* will be in August. It would be much appreciated if any correspondence could be sent to the following address, *as soon as possible by July 1st*, and marked with NNNS on the envelope. For those with access to a computer a WORD document or an ordinary text file on disc would be most helpful, or you can send an e-mail to: francis.f@virgin.net

FF

Francis Farrow
'Heathlands'
6 Havelock Road
Sheringham
Norfolk
NR26 8QD



THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK



THE NATURAL
HISTORY MUSEUM
20 AUG 2001
EXCHANGE
GENERAL LIB

NNNS Excursions 2001-2002

Toad-in-the-hole...

We are now well into summer - perhaps someone can tell the weather! Yet despite the changeable nature of our local climate the excursions have been held, attended and enjoyed as the following pages will reveal. My thanks to all who have contributed to those reports and to the other authors of articles. Please keep on sending in your observations and natural history notes. FF

Village shows the way

A village south of Norwich has set the rest of Norfolk a good example by producing its own "Wildlife 2000".

The *Natural History of Shotesham in the year 2000* is, like this Society's ongoing magnum opus, a snapshot of local wildlife at the millennium. It has been compiled by Frank Mitchell from records of birds, flowers, mammals, butterflies, dragonflies, amphibians and reptiles supplied by no fewer than 40 villagers - a splendid co-operative effort. And, having started, they intend to continue with some detailed recording of particular areas. What a good example for other communities!

David Paull

NNNS FIELD MEETINGS

I would like to apologise to anyone who failed to find the meeting point for the excursion to Life Wood. There were signs posted at the relevant junctions but we should have stated that this would be the case in the programme, so that members could be looking out for them. This was especially true as a housing estate is such an unusual place for us to congregate!

Some additional notes and reminders on the forthcoming programme:

Sunday July 29th 2001
Natural History Day
TED ELLIS TRUST - WHEATEN
Events from 10.00 am

Computers and Wildlife at Gressenhall. Saturday October 13th.

The new Norfolk Biological Records Centre will demonstrate some aspects of the work on biological recording in a morning or an afternoon session. The room size will not accommodate too many people at one time so, please would interested people write briefly to John Goldsmith at NBRC, Union House, Gressenhall, Norfolk. NR20 4DR or e-mail john.goldsmith.mus@norfolk.gov.uk expressing an interest for either the morning or the afternoon. If demand exceeds supply, John has agreed to repeat the session at a later date.

Bob Ellis, Chairman
Programme Committee



Garth's
Corner

The quarterly bulletin
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A Bittern's World

Much has been written in recent time about the rejuvenation of Broadland reed-beds, one of the objectives being to encourage the return of the bittern in significant numbers.

This is a bird which has enjoyed varying fortunes over the years. It was relatively common in the early part of the 19th century but by the end was regarded as being virtually absent as a breeding species.

Recolonization, presumably from the Continent, took place at the start of this century, the first nest being found near Sutton Broad in 1911. From that point, numbers increased, reaching a peak in 1954 with an estimated sixty 'booming' males in residence during the spring. Bittern populations are usually expressed in this way since, due to the secretive habits of the bird, it is not possible to count nests. Nevertheless, cock birds sing in spring, the song being the 'boom', more a grunt-like 'Bwump' of considerable carrying power and quite unmistakable.

The bittern's association with reed-beds is almost absolute. Unlike its close relation, the heron, which is often seen in the open on marshland or wading in shallow water, the bittern tends to remain hidden within the reed-bed, occasionally venturing to the margins where a thinning curtain of reeds borders a dyke or a stretch of more open water. Thus, for much of the time, the bird will be moving through the congested fen, scanning the sodden litter at ground level for aquatic insects, worms, frogs and, where there is sufficient water, fish. The position of the eyes facilitates this role. They are set at an angle on the sides of the head, looking down at the terrain over which the bird is

progressing. Consequently, when the bird wishes to view any object immediately towards the front, as when it is disturbed, it freezes, raising its bill skyward so that both eyes can now be focussed, not on the ground, but on the intruder. At such times, the striped, extended neck blends with the background of vertical reeds, the position often regarded as a typical bittern pose.



March onwards, nests are built within the dense cover of the reed-bed. A nest consists, for the most part, of strands of dead reed, crisscrossed to form a loose mound, the summit, where the eggs will rest, being almost flat. The appearance of the nest changes during incubation. Initially, the fragments of reed are their natural fawn colour. Later, they become coated with a greyish powder, the powder having been deposited from the powder-down feathers on the breast of the sitting bird. The normal use of this talcum-like material is in preening. If a bird has been feeding on a frog or an eel, some slime may have soiled the feathers and the powder is used to dry off the offending smear. On the nest, it is possible, with experience, to estimate how far the incubation has proceeded from the density of the powdery coating.

The eggs, pale olive-brown in colour, are laid at intervals of two or more days. The female starts sitting as soon as the first egg has been produced. As a result, the chicks do not hatch at the same time and, say,

in a family of four, the eldest chick may be a week older than the youngest. The difference in size is very obvious.

The cock bird appears to play no part in the incubation nor does he assist in rearing the chicks. Consequently, the hen must leave her brood from time to time to obtain food and on such occasions she may fly to another reed-bed where supplies are more readily available. She may be away for an hour or two but the chicks are already clothed in down and do not chill quickly. On her return, she feeds her family by regurgitation, producing, in the early stages, partially digested food. Inevitably, the larger chicks tend to compete more effectively for what is on offer and sometimes the youngest may not survive. How is death dealt with? Certainly on one occasion, recorded photographically, the hen, having fed the active chicks, picked up the dead one and swallowed it. It was recycled! One has doubts about whether this is the usual way in which a corpse is disposed.

Young bitterns, like young herons, are incapable of flight before they are around eight weeks old. Nevertheless, they tend to wander from the nesting platform after little more than two weeks, being led through the jungle-like fen vegetation by the hen, feeding as they go. It may be that, at first, they return each evening to the nest where they can be brooded during the hours of darkness but it is not long before they spend all their time at large in the reed-bed pursuing their mysterious ways. Later in the year when the youngsters are fully mobile some dispersion occurs but no matter how far they travel another reed-bed will be their final destination.

Reg Jones

A Bee Orchid Bonanza

A great many Norfolk parishes were enclosed by Act of Parliament in 18th and 19th centuries (in fact, there were over 300 Acts, placing Norfolk third in the national league table of enclosures). In the county these acts mostly served to complete up the process of the abandonment of medieval open-field systems, and to bring commons and wastes into cultivation. We can lament the passing of the great areas of heathland with their associated moires, but the Enclosure Acts did produce one benefit for 21st century naturalists. In many parishes the Acts set aside one or more Surveyor's Allotment. These were small pieces of land designed to provide material for road repairs.

Naturally, as material was excavated many became pits, and inevitably these were used to tip rubbish. In the end, many such pits were tidied up with a capping of rubble or soil and came to be forgotten about. Some were incorporated into fields or gardens (incorporated being a euphemism for stolen) whilst others were simply bits of waste land that no-one had responsibility for.

It would be an interesting exercise for every member to try to locate the Surveyor's Allotments (if they exist) in their parish. It is easy to do, just make an appointment to view the Enclosure Act and Map for your parish at the records office in Norwich. These maps are a source of endless fascination, and will have the Allotments clearly marked on them. They can then be located on the OS map and tracked down on the ground.

In our parish there are three surveyor's allotments. One has become the village pond, one is more or less incorporated into a plantation, and the third lies

forgotten behind a hedge. It was filled with rubbish and capped, but held a pleasant surprise for us. We first visited in May 1997 and found around 20 orchids. They had no flowers yet and were rather Rabbit-chewn, but aroused our interest. A return visit in June revealed that they were Bee Orchids *Ophrys apifera*, and there were ten robust and perfect spikes on show, a real discovery. Naturally, we continued to monitor this little forgotten corner. In 1998 we counted 40 spikes, and in 1999 found the astonishing total of 400 spikes. After this, things declined, with around 60 in 2000 and just 35 this year. All this in an area of around 50 m by 25 m.



There were a variety of other interesting plants too, and common grassland butterflies, making it a haven for wildlife. And, we know for sure that this is not an isolated case. We rent (from the District Council) another Surveyor's Allotment in Holt, in order to look after its wildlife interest.

It has Bee Orchids too, as well as hundreds and hundreds of Common Spotted Orchids *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*, Keel-fruited Corn Salad *Valerianella carinata* (a Norfolk rarity), and Saltmarsh Rush *Juncus gerardii* and Toothed Medick *Medicago polymorpha* well away from the coast (perhaps brought in with the soil cap many years ago?).

The lesson is clear. Surveyor's Allotments are well worth knowing about and can have considerable conservation value (as they are set aside by Act of Parliament, they cannot be sold, but the threat, as usual, is likely to be neglect; the Parish or District Council are the people to talk to about management etc, and if they are good, they may qualify as County Wildlife Sites).

Simon & Anne Harrap

Glow Worms

In August, last year, I went with a small group of people to a fen near South Walsham. The object of the outing was to find and count glow worms that had been seen here before in fair numbers.

We were successful as over twenty were found. They were mostly seen in a part of the fen that had been cut a few weeks previously, but some were found in thick sedge and reed. The small greenish light emitted by the females could be seen several feet away.

As we had arrived at the site just before dusk it was interesting to see other denizens of this area. A hunting barn owl was seen flying over the fen edge as was a single woodcock. Several pipistrelle bats were flitting alongside a row of trees, a water deer went crashing off through the reeds. A fox and a tawny owl were both heard calling in the wood close by.

In all a very interesting experience.

Tony Howes



Out of the Blue

Whilst sitting, enjoying the sun, in my garden at Twyford, Dereham, on the afternoon of June 28th I was amazed to see a Swallowtail butterfly fly in and alight for a minute or two on Thyme (*serpyllum*) flowering in the Alpine patch. It then flew over to my neighbour's garden and fed on the perennial Wall-flower still in bloom. Unfortunately it then flew away east. The weather was warm and sunny with a fresh west wind.

I had a good look at it to make sure that it was the English one — confirming it with one of my books. It was quite 'old' looking and not at all fresh.

My neighbour tells me that about ten years ago he had one in his garden.

Is it known that these butterflies fly at such distances from their normal habitat or could it have escaped from a Butterfly Farm?

I have contacted Pensthorpe Wildlife Centre a couple of miles down the road from here but they have none.

Roger Clarke.

Ken replies.....

Our Swallowtail butterflies *Papilio machaon* spp. *britannicus* have been reported several times outside their area of the Broads. Such sightings when they do occur have been mostly females though. For example in 1989 a female Swallowtail was witnessed, by Society member David Mower, laying eggs on Angelica on Beeston Common in North Norfolk. The males, however, rarely leave the humidity of Broadland, for if they do their genitalia becomes hardened and this prevents them from mating.

The continental form *Papilio machaon* spp. *gorganus* = *bigenaratus* is a renowned wanderer and has been recorded over many decades

appearing in this country, mostly in the southern counties. Unless witnessed by an expert it is always uncertain to be precise as to which spp. it belongs.

A quick check if one can be seen with open wings is as follows:

If it is *britannicus* the ground colour is a bright yellow. The dark band running down the outer edge of the front top wings is broad and even broader at the hind end, whereas in *gorganus* the ground colour is a much paler yellow and the dark band much narrower, almost parallel sided and even thinner at the hind end.

There are also other minor differences, however, these require more expert examination than can be given in the field to be absolutely certain.

Ken Durrant

Seaweed Surprise

A couple of years ago (Transactions, 2000) I wrote of discovering Channel Wrack *Pelvetia caliculata* growing attached to lumps of concrete in Wells. The unusual thing about this was that I had only previously seen this seaweed in Norfolk in its "free" form, caught up among the stems of saltmarsh plants at Blakeney Point. Subsequently I sent out a challenge to members of the Norfolk e-mail naturalists' forum to watch out for it. No response - I don't think many people can get worked up about Marine Algae!

However, on a recent walk to inspect the improved sea defences at Overy Staithes, I noticed a flourishing growth of seaweeds on the concrete lump groynes reaching out into the harbour and, lo and behold, the top level consisted of abundant clumps of Channel Wrack! (the next one down was Flat Wrack *Fucus spiralis*, by the way. I couldn't see what was below that, as the tide was in).

These groynes pre-date the recent work on the sea wall, so how long these particular species of Algae have been there I don't know. It does seem, however, that the "true", attached form of Channel Wrack is now well established on our coast.

Paul Banham

GOLDEN DAYS

I often take the camera with me and just wander about the countryside to see what insects I can find, this is very enjoyable on a warm sunny day. Time passes so quickly, it is pure joy just peering into bushes and looking for movement around you. Some of these finds have been imprinted on my memory like bright jewels and I look back on them with great pleasure.

The day at Upton when I saw my first Yellow Winged Darter *Sympetrum flaveolum*, a rare vagrant that turns up only very occasionally. Then the hot sticky day when I was walking down a fen path and saw a large dark butterfly coming towards me. I had on a blue sun hat at the time, as the butterfly reached me it circled my head a couple of times before continuing on its way, leaving me delighted and amazed at the sight of my first ever Camberwell Beauty. The short-winged Conehead I first saw at eye level in a reed bed, I took its portrait and only found out later what it was. Then there was the day on Postwick marsh when I was concentrating on keeping a Swallowtail butterfly in sharp focus on a buddleia stem, and then seeing out of the corner of my eye a Humming Bird Hawk Moth feeding from the same spray.

Not all sightings are identified. Several times in recent years I have seen a large yellow insect in flight at Upton Fen, I think it is a Hornet Clear-wing moth, one day I hope to spot it settled before it sees me, then I shall have another bright jewel to add to the collection.

Tony Howes



Beavers in the Fens? Am I alone in being just a little bit anxious about the current moves to reintroduce this delightful but potentially destructive creature?

Some have already been released in Scotland. Kent Wildlife Trust has nine in quarantine in a sanctuary, destined for an ancient wetland in the county. The Trust wants beavers to be reintroduced to suitable sites across Britain - and high on the list of possible locations is the Fens.

Fossil discoveries show that beavers were once abundant in the Fens but became extinct a thousand years ago. Professor Stephen Harris, chairman of the Mammal Society, is all in favour of bringing back the European beaver - "not the dam-building American kind", he wrote in an article in *The Times*. "In the Fens," wrote June Southworth in the *Daily Mail*, "there was so much still water that the rodent had no need to fell trees and build the dams for which is it famous - a fact that should allay the fears of present-day landowners if the beaver is to make a comeback". But that was centuries before the Fens were drained. Conditions have changed dramatically.

European beavers do build dams - and fell trees to do so. There is a record of a beaver dam in Russia 400ft long, more than 3ft high and up to 3ft wide.

The return of the beaver has also been welcomed by Anthony Legge, professor of environmental archaeology at London University. But, in a letter to *The Times*, he noted that J.E. Hartig, in his British

Animals Extinct in Historic Times (1880), recorded that beavers were released by a Mr Barnes in Southerley Park, near Wangford, Suffolk. They prospered, so much so that their dams were destroyed because they were an eyesore. They moved downstream where they were killed because of the damage they did to forestry.

What if beavers were reintroduced to the Fens, thrived and spread to rivers like the Little Ouse, the Nar and the Stiffkey? The effect might be beneficial in improving wetland habitats. Or it might not. It took ten years and huge sums of money to rid East Anglia of the coypu. Muntjac are now a major pest. Mink are causing devastation to native wildlife. Various aquatic arrivals - Asiatic clams, crayfish, North American bullfrogs - are becoming a major problem.

Agreed, they are introductions, deliberate or accidental, rather than reintroductions. But the natural predators of those once-native species are themselves extinct. Dare we take the risk?

Perhaps I am just being paranoid. But isn't it ironic that, while Professor Harris is commending an EU Directive "instructing all countries that they ought to consider reintroducing once-native species", the Broads Authority will be taking part in a Government-sponsored investigation into the ecological damage caused by alien plants and animals.

I hope to read your views in future issues of *Natterjack*.
David Paull

EXCURSION REPORTS

Sporle Wood,

May 6, 2001

There was great relief when we heard from Mr Kilvert, owner of the wood, that we would be able to hold our field meeting as planned. Thus it was that about 30 members, eager to get out into the wild once more, arrived for this meeting. The fact that the wood had scarcely been visited before (except by intrepid Flora Recorders) also attracted experts in many fields.

Sporle Wood is at the south-westerly limit of the Central Norfolk woods and has been known since medieval times when it was owned by the Paston family. A description of it in

1472 shows it to have been considerably larger than it is now, but it is safe to say that the section which remains today has never been completely cleared though the lack of really old trees meant there were not many of the rarer mosses or liverworts. We began by walking the track outside the northern edge of the wood where the ditch bank was carpeted with dog's mercury and we could glimpse bluebells within. Once inside, the party split up, but those who remained with the leader had the advantage of the presence of Mrs Kilvert who was able to tell us something of the present management and use of the wood. One part of the wood had, in the past, been planted with larch, but four years ago these were cleared and new young hazel planted in anticipation of later coppicing. Four years ago when the leader visited the wood this area was

almost completely carpeted with wood millet grass but now it was botanically the richest area and the grass has given way to carpets of bluebells, many early purple orchids, yellow archangel, hairy St. John's wort and a small colony of wood goldilocks which had been missed when recording for the Flora! We were interested that very few of the many plants of wood anemone were flowering and a closer look showed that almost every flower had been eaten. Several possible culprits were suggested including pigeons, pheasants and muntjac, all plausible but none could be proven. I wonder if anyone has noticed this in woods elsewhere? The lateness of the season hampered those looking for insects but blackcaps, chiff-chaff, willow warblers and marsh tits were singing and we felt that spring at last was really with us. Gillian Beckett

Wild Flowers Revealed at Foxley Wood NWT Reserve

Sunday 13th May 2001

Leader: Rob Yaxley

After worries about access due to foot & mouth and the extremely wet condition of the wood, in the event this was an extremely successful meeting, with 60-70 people present for the morning session (although rather fewer stayed on until the afternoon). We broke up into smaller parties, each led by an experienced botanist (although some were more experienced than others!) and quickly began to find some of the things which make Foxley such a wonderful place. Many of the spring flowers were showing well, including Wood Anemone *Anemone nemorosa*, Lesser Celandine *Ranunculus ficaria*, Common Dog-violet *Viola riviniana*, Wood-sorrel *Oxalis acetosella*, Bugle *Ajuga reptans*, Germander Speedwell *Veronica chamaedrys* and a fine showing of Bluebells *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* and Early Purple Orchids *Orchis mascula*. In some recently cleared coppice there were some rather weedy Herb Paris *Paris quadrifolia* and, most interestingly, some large patches of Orpine *Sedum telephium* too. One of Foxley's specialities, the Wild Service-tree *Sorbus torminalis*, was not yet in bloom, and best identified by the plastic bag tied around its trunk, but Midland Hawthorn *Crataegus laevigata* was in flower, and there was a debate over the identification of some trees which seemed to show variable numbers of styles. Indeed, the aim of the day was to introduce people to wild flower identification, and there was much poring over field guides and keys by both beginner and expert alike (we particularly liked the comparison of leaf shape and texture between Barren Strawberry *Potentilla sterilis* and Wild Strawberry *Fragaria vesca*).

In the afternoon more time was spent on grasses and sedges, with Hairy Wood-rush *Luzula pilosa* and Great Wood-rush *Luzula sylvatica* being notable, but the real stars were Thin-spiked Wood Sedge *Carex strigosa* at its only Norfolk locality and the rather localised Pale Sedge *Carex pallescens* (although neither was in flower let alone fruiting, and *C. strigosa* especially generated some scepticism). Rob showed us a very limited area of acidic podsol in the centre of an otherwise rather calcareous wood, with *Molinia* as well as Common Sedge *Carex nigra* and Pill Sedge *Carex pilulifera*.

We also managed to find Narrow Buckler Fern *Dryopteris carthusiana*, a species which our leader had yet to identify at Foxley. All this against a background of Willow and Garden Warblers, Chiffchaffs and Blackcaps, and it was a great day out.

Simon & Anne Harrap

Catfield Hall Saturday 16th June 2001

Torrential rain, thunder and lightning directly overhead, the bent fenland reeds sodden with water and a warm humid atmosphere, yet twelve hardy naturalists assembled for the field meeting. We all first needed to spray our boots and cars with disinfectant because of the fears of foot and mouth disease before we ventured onto the fens. The weather broke kindly for us as we walked from our cars towards Middle Marsh where swallowtail butterflies were feeding on the thistle heads. After the heavy rain overnight and during the morning it was a surprise to see so many swallowtails active and even alive. The break in the weather was not to last and as the party split into the botanists-entomologists moving into the reed beds and the freshwater group following the

dyke pathways the rain fell to monsoon levels. Trees for shelter always seemed to be on the other side of the dykes and we all got very wet. An experience we were to meet again after lunch.

Caterpillars of the Garden Tiger moth *Arctia caja* L. were found on Marsh Fern and of the Emperor moth *Saturnia pavonia* L. on bog myrtle.

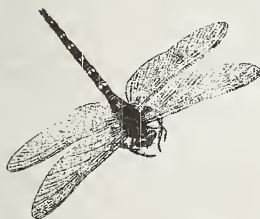


Emperor Moth (female)

Four species of leech live in the dykes and Broad: *Piscicola geometra* (L.) and *Hemiclepsis marginata* (Müller) are ectoparasites of fish whilst *Theromyzon tessulatum* (Müller) is a parasite of waterfowl where it enters the nostrils and inserts its proboscis through the wall of the nasal and buccal cavities. The fourth leech *Erpobdella octoculata* (L.) is common throughout Norfolk. It is a carnivore of small insect larvae, waterfleas (fourteen species recorded at Catfield) and aquatic worms. An important discovery of mayfly larvae of *Caenis robusta* Etn. in the dykes and Broad brings the Norfolk records for this species to four. It has been noted in the adjacent fens at Catfield owned by Butterfly Conservation, at Wheatfen Broad and Scoulton Mere. The larvae are comparatively large and can be described as frequent in the Catfield waters.

The fens proved to be alive with dragonflies and damselflies. The dykes and Broad are rich in aquatic and marginal vegetation

and the many sheltered sites are of critical importance in maintaining the diversity and number of species. The list recorded includes the Azure, Variable, Blue-tailed, Red-eyed and Large Red damselflies. The Southern Hawker, Brown Hawker, Migrant Hawker, and the Norfolk Hawker, which is largely confined to the Broads where it favours clean dykes and water soldier plants, have been observed at Catfield. The Hairy Dragonfly, although generally scarce in the UK is plentiful near dykes with well vegetated margins. On this field visit both the Common Darter and Four-spotted Chaser were seen.



The fens proved to be rich in ferns. The Royal Fern *Osmunda regalis* L. is a fern of acid soils and some clumps were noted where the fern had grown to a large size. Marsh Fern *Thelypteris palustris* Schott is common in the fens, whilst both Male *Dryopteris filix-mas* (L.) Schott) and Broad Buckler *Dryopteris dilatata* (Hoffm.) Gray ferns are widespread but occasional. An important discovery of two clumps of the Red Data Book Crested Buckler fern *Dryopteris cristata* (L.) Gray on mounds of Sphagnum is considered by Bob Ellis to show the Catfield fens as the best site in Norfolk for this rarity. Six species of bog mosses in a single site is rare and this clearly indicates the importance of the fens of this part of the River Ant valley. *Sphagnum subnitens*, *S. fimbriatum*, *S. palustre*, *S. squarrosum*, *S. capillifolium* and *S. fallax*.

Roy Baker

Kelling Heath

Wednesday 20th June 2001

The aim of this evening meeting, which we were leading, was to hear, and hopefully see, Nightjar. We had near-perfect weather, warm, still and not a cloud in the sky, and started off by looking around the heath itself, which straddles the road between Holt and Weybourne. A great deal of work has been done in recent years to restore the heath (mainly by the County Council) with remarkable success. We admired some vast sweeps of Wavy Hair Grass *Deschampsia flexuosa* and areas of Heather *Calluna vulgaris* and Western Gorse *Ulex galli* where, until recently, the ground had been dominated by Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* and Silver Birch *Betula pendula*.

In the couple of hours before darkness some serious botanising took place. The alien Pirri-pirri Bur *Acaena anserinifolia* was admired, and then it was noses to the ground as we walked along the broad tracks through parts of the area. Heath Grass *Danthonia decumbens* was common in some areas, and another speciality was Mossy Stonecrop *Crassula tillaea*, now turned a beautiful red.

Sharp eyes spotted the white flowers of Bird's-foot Clover *Trifolium ornithopodioides* and also the rather larger (but still tiny) Bird's-foot *Ornithopus perpusillus*. There was also a useful comparison of Small and Common Cudweeds *Filago minima* and *F. vulgaris*. Even mosses got a look-in, with another alien, *Campylopus introflexus*, colonising bare ground and changing colour from silvery-green when viewed obliquely

(due to the stars of scattered hairs at the leaf-point) to a rather drab grey-green when viewed from above.

At last, it was dusk, and a Nightjar began calling, almost on cue, at 21.50 hrs. For a while this male seemed glued to his tree and well out of sight but eventually he appeared, wing-clapping and calling in flight, and some of us even saw him sitting, silhouetted, on a pine as the light really faded. His mate was also in evidence, flying Kestrel-like around us, and back at the cars we heard a second churring male to round off a fantastic evening.

Simon & Anne Harrap

Cley to Blakeney Point Saturday 7th July 2001

More than 20 hardy souls braved the mist and the threat of rain to walk from the Wildlife Trust car park at Cley to Blakeney Point, ably led by Alec Bull. This was the second of the society's series of walks entitled "Wildflowers Revealed". As the tide was still fairly high, we decided to tramp the shingle and botanise on the way out, leaving the option of the less arduous walk along the beach for the journey back. We soon came across a splendid show of yellow-horned poppies *Glaucium flavum* and then, between scattered patches of sea-sandwort and shrubby sea-blite, we admired a colony of sea pea *Lathyrus japonicus* in full bloom. This species was first introduced at Blakeney by F.W. Oliver in 1912 but the colony was lost and following the 1953 floods Ted Ellis scattered seed on this shingle bank at Cley where it still persists - after nearly 50 years and many a storm and surge tide. According to Petch and Swann, the seed introduced in 1912 came from Chesil Beach but does anyone know where Ted acquired his seeds?

We soon paused to look at some of the plants of the salt-marsh - common sea-lavender, sea wormwood, sea purslane,

annual sea-blite, sea arrow-grass, cord-grass and reflexed salt-marsh grass. Much of the sea-lavender here was sporting the rust *Uromyces limonii* with its rings of tiny bright-orange cluster-cups (aecia). Continuing along the shingle, we passed a magnificent specimen of sea-kale *Crambe maritima*, the same plant that Alec has known since it was a seedling many years ago. Trudging on, we reached "Half-way House" and in areas here the silt, sand and gravely shingle form firmer patches which support a rather special flora including the pretty little sea heath *Frankenia laevis*, sea pearlwort *Sagina maritima*, now in seed, and the strange curved hard-grass *Parapholis incurva*. Along another long stretch of shingle known as "The Marrams", though there is little sign now of sand dune or marram grass, we compared the sticky groundsel with the heath groundsel and examined different species of orache.

When we reached the area of dunes known as "The Hood" we took a well-earned rest and a break for lunch, but botany was never far from our minds. Here we saw a wonderful spread of grey hair-grass *Corynephorus canescens* and amongst the sand-sedge were some seed-heads of smooth cat's-ear *Hypochaeris glabra*. On the seaward side of the dunes, the deep-pink, white-spoked trumpets of sea bindweed *Calystegia soldanella* inspired one member of the party to stop and sketch. Onward then to Blakeney Point itself and here our long walk was well rewarded by the sight of what I think of as the jewel of the North Norfolk coast - for in Britain it can now only be found in a few places between Holme and Blakeney Point - matted sea-lavender *Limonium bellidifolium*. Not only is this a "Red Data Book plant" but to my eye, when in full flower as it was on this occasion, it is one of the most attractive of our native wild plants and it is a minor miracle that something that looks so delicate is adapted to survive in what, to a small vascular plant, must be a very harsh environment. Here it is joined by more of the sea heath and another rare sea-lavender *Limonium binervosum* ssp. *anglicum*.

Although a few robust members of the party returned along the shingle, many of us chose the easier route along the now exposed beach. As we traipsed back, we were distracted by some bryozoans washed up on the strand line, were entertained by little terns fishing off-shore, and were briefly observed by a solitary seal. Finally back at the car park, you might have thought that our day was concluded - but no, Alec led us down to "Half-moon Pond" where we saw lesser pondweed *Potamogeton pusillus* and then spiral tassel-weed *Ruppia cirrhosa* with its long twisted peduncle bearing an umbel of shorter-stalked fruits. On the borders of the pond we examined long-bracted sedge *Carex extensa* and frog rush *Juncus ambiguus*. This latter plant was first reported here by Mr. K. K. Harrison in 1998, unfortunately just too late to appear in "A Flora of Norfolk". The margin of this brackish lagoon is its only known locality in the county and the presence of several locally rare plants in this one small area led to a debate about what will happen to the pond when the new sea defence across the marshes is commissioned. If the pond and its margins were to disappear under the spread of the shingle bank it could lead to a county extinction *Juncus ambiguus*, a vice-county extinction *Carex extensa* and the loss of a good colony of the nationally scarce spiral tasselweed (one of only four or so sites in the county, as far as I know). If this were to happen it would be a sad loss indeed, but this outcome is far from certain.

All in all, we saw almost 90 different species of plant, three of which are listed in the Red Data Book

Corynephorus canescens, *Limonium bellidifolium* and *Limonium binervosum* and eight of which are considered nationally scarce (*Festuca arenaria*, *Frankenia laevis*, *Hordeum marinum*, *Limonium humile*, *Parapholis incurva*, *Ruppia cirrhosa*, *Sarcocornia perennis* and *Suaeda vera*). Several more are locally scarce. I'm sure this illustrates just what a treasure our diverse local flora is. Many thanks to Alec for leading such an enjoyable and botanically rewarding excursion.

Bob Ellis

Joyce Robinson

It is with sadness that we report the passing of Joyce Robinson after a short illness following years of incapacity due to arthritis. Joyce served this Society as Excursion Secretary for 17 years in the days when we met every two weeks throughout the spring and summer at sites over Norfolk and the bordering counties. Joyce was born in Norfolk and she knew the county intimately. It was this knowledge which she shared with us in planning and guiding the field visits for nearly two decades. She continued to be active in the Society for many years and in recognition the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society honoured Joyce with a lifetime position as Vice-President.

Roy Baker

TED ELLIS TRUST

An invitation

Mark Cocker, author, broadcaster and environmentalist will be in Norwich on 9 October to give an interactive, illustrated talk entitled 'Birds Britannica -- Folklore in Norfolk and Beyond'. The evening is being presented by the Friends of the Ted Ellis Trust at 7.30pm at the Friends Meeting House, Upper Goat Lane, Norwich. Admission is £2.50 including refreshments. City centre car parks are available.

Further details may be found on:
www.tedellistrust.org.uk

A note to CONTRIBUTORS.

The next *Natterjack* will be in November. It would be much appreciated if any correspondence or disc could be sent to the following address, as soon as possible by Oct. 1st, or by e-mail to: francis.f@virgin.net

FF

Francis Farrow
'Heathlands'
6 Havelock Road
Sheringham
Norfolk
NR26 8QD



THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK



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Toad-in-the-hole...

According to the numbering when I took over as editor we have reached our 75th edition of 'The Norfolk Natterjack' (although the initial bulletin was known simply as 'Natterjack'). A bit of a milestone anyway and one that can only have been reached by members sending in their notes and reports. My thanks for your continued support and especially to those that have contributed to this edition. May I also take this opportunity to wish all readers a very happy Christmas and a peaceful new year. FF

RESEARCH: County Wildlife Sites

Helen Baczkowska, NWT Biodiversity Project Officer, has passed a request to the Society for any members interested in monitoring two CWS. These sites are on land owned by Watton Produce, a large vegetable-growing farm which has some land in conversion to organic and areas in a Countryside Stewardship scheme. Mr. Negus of Watton Produce, near Attleborough is keen to know what wildlife exists on the farm, especially the CWS and to see if it is possible to set in place some monitoring for the future.



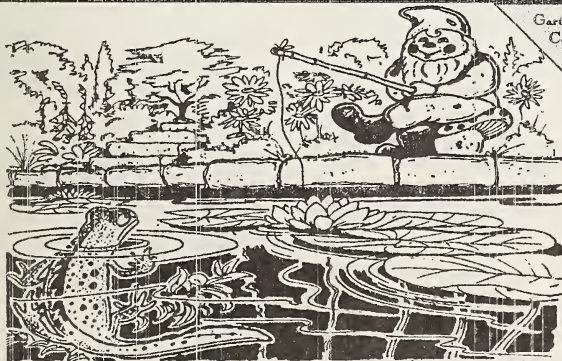
**VOLUNTEERS
NEEDED**

The sites are Shropham Grove (TL 980924) and the River Thet Valley (TL 991913). The former is coppiced woodland with some

standards and adjacent to more disturbed and open woodland with recent plantings. Standards are largely oak *Quercus robur* and hornbeam *Carpinus betulus*. The river valley site is mainly marshy and damp grassland with areas of woodland and scrub. The site is cattle grazed to a short turf in places. In the alder *Alnus glutinosa* woodland wood avens *Geum urbanum* and water chickweed *Myosoton aquaticum* have been recorded.

Members are requested initially to contact Robert Maidstone, chairman of the research committee, for further details at:

38 Hall Lane, Wacton, Norwich,
NR15 2UH. Tel: 01508 531287.



"I WISH THAT MAN WOULD GO AWAY, I'VE GOT TO GET OUT SOON TO HIBERNATE."

The quarterly bulletin
of the
Norfolk & Norwich
Naturalists' Society



Founded 1869
Registered Charity No. 291604

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November 2001

Scarce Bug Find

During August my friend, Mike Hall, rang me to say that he had found a large plant bug in his moth trap at Scole, near Diss. From his accurate description I felt sure that it was one of our scarcer species. He said he would forward it on to me to verify.

A letter arrived containing two specimens, for he had caught another the next night. They were as expected, *Ledra aurita* L. The Eared Plant Bug. When I rang to thank him he then said that he had been moth trapping on Knettishall heath just over the border in Suffolk and had seen at least half a dozen specimens there. We hope that this scarce insect is on the increase. It feeds on oak, but is practically camouflaged and hard to see naturally.

Ken Durrant

Rarities still turning up

Each year I receive a number of collections of insects from ultraviolet fly killers situated in cafés and other establishments. One such collection arrived from the café at Sheringham Hall car park via the National Trust warden, Keith Zealand.

I managed to produce a list of 29 different insects on this occasion including a choice find, a large black hoverfly, minus head but identifiable by its large expanded hind femurs. It was the bee mimic, *Brachypalpus laphriformis* Fallen, an extremely rare insect only recorded from ancient forests, like the New Forest or from Southern Wales, where it has been found on dead beech trunks.

Maybe this will turn out to be the first Norfolk example, but from such a most unlikely source.

Ken Durrant

Observations of the hoverfly *Volucella inanis* in west Norwich

The first recorded occurrence of the hoverfly *Volucella inanis* in Norfolk was in August 1999 when a female visited my Norwich garden as reported in the *Transactions* 2000, p. 29.

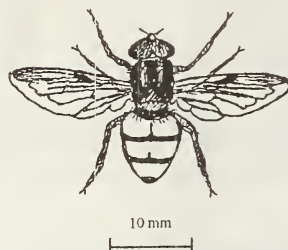
To judge from a couple of sightings made in 2001 it would seem to have consolidated its presence in the suburbs of west Norwich. On 5 August I came across a male on flowers of water mint in the Yare Valley close to Earlham Park and two days later a female arrived again in my garden where it spent a considerable time on marjoram just as its predecessor had done two years previously. It also briefly visited field scabious flowers.

On the face of it there seemed no connection between the sightings - one in a suburban garden and the other on open marshes. But I did find a link. No more than 5 metres away from the marjoram I have meadowsweet and great willow-herb flourishing (especially so with this years rain) and the willow-herb also grows around a pond in an adjoining garden. As to be expected both plants occur in great quantity on the Yare marshes in the area *inanis* was found. This seems too much of a coincidence and I feel sure that the insect in my garden originated from the marshes some 2 miles distant and that the occurrence of these two components of its habitat there acted as a stimulus to investigation.

With its willingness to visit gardens this striking and distinctive hoverfly should certainly attract attention and I dare say there will be further records when people become aware of the likelihood of its presence.

It can only really be confused with the much larger *Volucella zonaria* and both are shown illustrated in Chinery's Guide to Insects of Britain and Western Europe which will aid

recognition and comparison. The respective winglengths are 12.25-14.25mm for *inanis* and 15.5-19.5 for *zonaria*.



Both species are dependent on social wasps, the larvae of *inanis* being ectoparasites of wasp larvae. *Vespa germanica* and *Vespa crabro* (hornet) are recorded hosts and generally speaking a good wasp year will mean a good following year for the hoverflies.

Both species too have a very similar distribution pattern, their stronghold being in the South-east and particularly the surrounds of London where they often frequent parks and gardens.

The spread of *inanis* may be matched by *zonaria* which has already been recorded at Sheringham by Ken Durrant in 2000-so both species are worth looking out for.

It will be interesting to see how quickly *inanis* disperses across the county. Its first recorded appearance in Cambridgeshire was at Chippenham Fen in 1999 raising the possibility that humid sites such as fens and marshes may have a high importance as the insect moves northwards.

Will it become a familiar sight on fen flowers in Broadland? Only time will tell.

Stuart Paston

See also:

"A day to remember" on page 3.

A day to remember

On August 8th, being a nice sunny and warm day, Francis Farrow and I took a stroll over Beeston Common to see what we could find, as the weather in the past weeks had generally been dull or too wet and windy. Certainly the orchids were late in flowering but were also quick to disappear, in early June we could show interested people eight different species but by late July it was an effort to find three. The three insectivorous plants, butter wort, *Pinguicula vulgaris* and the sundews, *Drosera rotundifolia* and *D. longifolia* (= *anglica*), however, had done extremely well due to the wet spring.

Many of the flower heads of wild angelica, a feature of late summer, possessed collections of hoverflies, mainly *Eristalis* spp, and flies such as the parasitic Tachinids, *Tachina fera* and *Ericampocera succincta*, also the sexual dimorphic *Graphomya maculata* together with many small black wasps of the *Crossocerus* and *Tiffia* species.

The *piece de resistance* of the visit, however, came when we arrived at one of the many patches of Canadian goldenrod, *Solidago canadensis*, which was still in full flower. This particular patch was sheltered by shrubs from the gentle breeze and was literally taken over with numerous Bee Wolf wasps, *Philanthus triangulum*, all males. It was possible to see at least 10-12 everywhere we looked. Considering that this wasp has only in recent years been found in East Anglia it was surprising to find such a number.

Another welcome surprise came just as we were about to leave the common, I took my first Norfolk example of the hoverfly, *Volucella inanis* from a bramble leaf but suffered a few large holes in my net for the effort, but it still counts as one of those special days to remember.

Ken Durrant

The Hat Trick

A trip in August to Strumpshaw R.S.P.B. reserve was high-lighted by a fine osprey seen there. It's not unusual to see this lovely bird in Norfolk, several are recorded passing through on migration each year, often staying for a few days, especially on coming south from Scotland.

This year a pair have nested in the English Lake District, another pair at Rutland Water, so who knows - maybe they will be back breeding in Norfolk before very long. There is no lack of suitable nesting locations for them and fish are plentiful. It's 200 years or so since ospreys last nested in England, providing they are left unmolested by the egg collectors they could have the same success as the red kite. It would be superb to have the 'fish hawk' back breeding on the Broads.

The bird at Strumpshaw was seen to catch a small pike in front of the 'brick hide' and later another small fish, probably a roach, was taken. At one point the osprey, while perched in a dead tree, 'had its collar felt' by a female marsh harrier as it circled the tree a couple of times. Two super birds in view at the same time, what more could one ask? - Well - in another dead tree at the very back of the marsh a third bird sat waiting for the sun to come out so he could have his lunch of dragonflies.

A hat trick of raptors in the binoculars, osprey, marsh harrier and the elegant hobby - Heaven.



Tony Howes

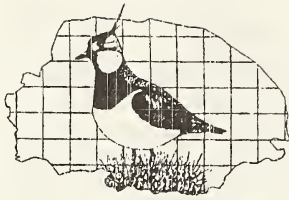
Goose-watching in Wells.



When I moved to Wells from central Norfolk in 1969, the traditional great flocks of Grey Geese were just a folk-memory, preserved by the few surviving pre-war wildfowlers. However, much to everyone's surprise, they began to re-appear in the late eighties, and in recent years the numbers of Pink-foot have been, if not astronomical, at least enormous, counted in tens of thousands. As they roost on the Wells/Warham beach, and feed inland, their early-morning flight-path often takes them over my house, when the sky can be quite filled with their strung-out lines, generally in the traditional V shape. They seem to be only too keen to waste energy on "talking" to each other with their bi-syllabic call, quite different from the "grunt" of the Brents.

My early-morning cycle rides to the beach (*Transactions*, 1998 p.304) sometimes, especially on dull days, enable me to see them still massed on the sand near the tide-line, where they form extensive dark blocks. I assume, though I have never seen it, that they stay there at night even when the tide floats them off. Although many of them feed on sugar-beet fields over much of N. W. Norfolk, there are generally plenty to be found on the permanent pasture either side of Lady Anne's Road, Holkham, where they are joined, from December onwards, by a few hundred White-fronts. For the last couple of years they have got very tame, happily feeding within a few metres of the parked cars. There are generally Brents as well, and three times in recent years there has been a single spectacular Red-breasted Goose with them, apparently under the impression that it, too, is a Brent.

Paul Banham



NORFOLK BIRD ATLAS

By the end of the summer 2001, two years of fieldwork had been completed for the Norfolk Bird Atlas. Despite the understandable and necessary restrictions imposed by the foot-and-mouth crisis, an encouraging amount of fieldwork was possible during the late winter, spring and summer of 2001. Hopefully full access will once more be possible in most parts of Norfolk during the forthcoming winter and summer.

To date, 341 tetrads have been surveyed in both the early and late winter periods. Thus 23% of Norfolk has been covered for the Winter Atlas, although coverage has not been uniform throughout the county. As has been found in many previous bird surveys, for example those organised by the BTO, good coverage has been achieved around the coast and inland in north-east Norfolk, where large numbers of observers live, but is very patchy in parts of south-east, north-west and west Norfolk. There are large areas in these parts of the county where no fieldwork has yet been carried out.

Unfortunately, coverage during the summer months has proved more difficult and as a result completed forms, with data from two breeding season visits, have only been received for 219 tetrads. However, it is known that others have been visited but the recording forms have yet to be sent in. Again, as in the winter, certain parts of Norfolk have received very poor coverage. It seems likely that the original target of completing the fieldwork in five years will not be met, but it is still hoped to complete it in a reasonable period of time, so that the results are meaningful.

Every single record that has been submitted is now on the database, and the figures from any completed recording sheets are now entered within a day or so of them being received. These are then instantly available for analysis. There can't be many other bird surveys in the country where the information available is so up-to-date! At the time of writing this article, the Winter Atlas database contained 26,725 entries from 'set' visits and 3,904 supplementary records; while the Breeding Atlas database contained 12,479 entries - and they've all been checked!

By asking observers to actually count all the birds (or in the summer the number of pairs) that are found in the tetrad, it is possible to produce much more than simple distribution maps. The relative abundance in different parts of the county will also become apparent, as will any changes of distribution and abundance between winter and summer.

Although different tetrads are being surveyed each year, for the common and widespread species, it should also be possible to obtain some year-on-year comparisons. For example during the breeding season the percentage of occupied tetrads by individual species can be compared, as well as the average number of pairs per occupied tetrad. Figures obtained during the summers of 2000 and 2001 suggest that the numbers of House Sparrows and Starlings have increased markedly between the two years (both over up 30%), whereas Blackcap, Long-tailed Tit and Yellowhammer have all shown a reduction in the average number of pairs per occupied tetrad of over 30%. Whether these trends will be demonstrated nationally or are even significant remains to be seen.

I would be delighted to hear from anyone who would like to join the band of over 200 observers that have already helped with the fieldwork for the Norfolk Bird Atlas. I can be contacted at:

4 Heath Road, Sheringham,
Norfolk, NR 26 8JH or
mosstaylor@care4free.net

Moss Taylor

Blacker than black

The strangest things don't always happen in the strangest places. In fact my observation only happened during early September this year. While on holiday on the west coast of Scotland, on a damp afternoon, I visited Ullapool. I crossed the road through a housing estate where several of the inhabitants had roaring fires. By the colour of the smoke I would have guessed it was peat they were burning. However, perched on the chimneys around the smoking pots were rooks, jackdaws and hooded crows. Each in turn jumped onto the smoking pot and opened their damp wings fully over the thick black smoke. They then jumped off and preened themselves before jumping back on again. Every house in the row with a fire had other rooks etc., doing the same thing. Were they drying their feathers or simply ridding themselves of mites or the like? They must be truly the blackest birds in Britain. The lady of the house who saw me videoing her chimney, came out in despair looking up. I informed her I was filming the birds on her chimney pot. She replied "Thank god I thought the chimney was on fire!"

G. Morris

Mammal record!

On The 8th May 2001 on arrival at Wheathfen I was met by the warden, David Nobbs.

"Would you like to see a Yellow-necked Mouse" he asked.

Of course I replied "Yes". He then produced a freshly dead specimen on a saucer.

"Who found that?" I asked.

"The Wheathfen cat" he replied.

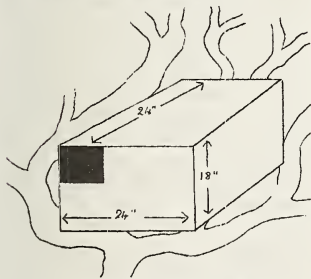
So we now have a new Mammal recorder in more than one way.

Colin Jacobs

Boxing for the Future

Barn owls seem to be holding their own in Norfolk at the moment. Nevertheless they are far from common and it's always a great pleasure to see one, usually at dusk, as it beats slowly along a field edge hunting for voles and mice.

I was therefore very pleased when I found one of my nest boxes had been taken over by a pair this year, it had five eggs in mid May and on checking again mid June all had hatched successfully. This part of the Yare valley does not have many old hollow trees and the old fashioned barns and outbuildings



beloved by these beautiful birds are getting scarcer as time goes by. I think erecting nest boxes might be one of the ways forward to help these owls, placed in a tree on the edge of the grazing marshes they are often used to roost in for a year or two. This is easily checked by the pellets they leave behind, if they are undisturbed then they may breed there. They make no nest, laying the eggs directly on to the carpet of pellets.

Apart from barn owls these boxes may also be used by kestrels, stock doves and tawny owls.

Tony Howes

Eight legs moving north

On a very dull morning (30th Aug '01) while walking over Beeston Common I spotted a harvestman sitting on a willowherb leaf. It was unusual in that it was resting with its legs stretched more or less at 90° to its body. Luckily it was still there in the afternoon when I managed to take its photograph. It turned out to be *Dicranopalpus caudatus* Dresco - a species rarely met with in Norfolk but one that is probably moving north with climate change. It was first recorded in Bournemouth in 1957 (Sankey and Savory - *British Harvestmen*, 1974).

Francis Farrow

EXCURSION REPORTS

Strumpshaw Fen

Sunday 22nd July, 2001

Leader: Bob Ellis

Once again we had a good turnout for the third of the "Wild Flowers Revealed" meetings, with about 25 people attending with a mix of members of the society and new faces.

We divided into two main groups and set off along the footpath leading down to the fen, looking at the wayside flowers on the way. The first plant to catch our attention was butcher's broom *Ruscus aculeatus*, which unlike most other plants has no true leaves but has leaf-like structures that are really flattened stems.

A corner of a barley field provided us with quite a few arable weeds such as fools' parsley, fat hen, field forget-me-not, redshank, wild radish, wall speedwell and field pansy.

Moving on into the fen, we soon came across the broadland specialities such as marsh sowthistle *Sonchus palustris* overtopping the surrounding vegetation; marsh pea *Lathyrus palustris* entwining the reed stems, a delicate relative of the garden everlasting pea; milk-parsley *Peucedanum palustre* the food plant of the swallowtail butterfly - and there were the caterpillars to prove it; cowbane *Cicuta virosa* a very poisonous plant found mainly on the banks of streams and dykes of broadland and marsh fern *Thelypteris palustris*, which is nationally scarce but can be abundant locally.

We all stopped to admire the unusual flowers of the marsh cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris* whose wine-red sepals are much larger than the petals. In the Isle of Man this plant is called "bog strawberry".

Also seen in this part of the fen was common skullcap *Scutellaria galericulata* which produces a volatile oil called scutellarin, reputed to be one of the best treatments for nervous disorders; orange balsam, a native of North America where it is known as "jewel weed"; ragged robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi* whose specific name is Latin for "cuckoo flower", one of three British flowers known by this name. Along the riverbank we encountered a good stand of golden dock *Rumex maritimus*.

After lunch, we moved on to the wild flower meadow, soon finding red bartisia *Odontites vernus* a semi-parasite of grasses, a plant that was once considered a cure for toothache. *Odontites* comes from the Greek word for tooth. Nearby was another partial parasite of grasses, yellow-rattle *Rhinanthus minor*, the generic name coming from two Greek words meaning "nose" and "flower", relating to the shape of the corolla.

We were a little late for orchids, but we did see marsh helleborine *Epipactis palustris*, southern marsh-orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* and common spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*. In Somerset, common spotted-orchid is also known as "dead man's fingers", referring to the flattened underground tubers which resemble fingers on a hand.

In the dyke crossing the meadow there were lots of water-soldiers *Stratiotes aloides*, another of our broadland specialities. These aloe-like plants sink to the bottom of the dykes at the end of the summer, by accumulating an encrustation of limy matter on their leaves. Also in the dyke was frog-bit *Hydrocharis morsus-ranae*, this is another plant that avoids the ice in winter by growing special buds and seeds which sink and become buried in the comparatively warm mud. In the same dyke were flat-stalked pondweed *Potamogeton freisii* and lesser water-parsnip *Berula erecta*.

Continued on page 6

Strumpshaw continued:

There were several sedges on the meadow, some of which would have remained just sedges but for the expertise of Bob. There were 11 in all including: fibrous tussock-sedge *Carex appropinquata*, tufted-sedge *C. elata*, glaucous sedge *C. flacca*, tawny sedge *C. hostiana*, carnation sedge *C. panicea* and greater tussock-sedge *C. paniculata*.

Some dragonflies were on the wing including brown and southern hawkers and emerald and blue-tailed damselflies. Also noted were short-winged conehead and dark bush cricket.

Although Strumpshaw Fen is managed primarily for birds, we saw very few on the day, but we did hear a quick burst from a Cetti's warbler and saw a marsh harrier quartering the reed beds. However, as we found a grand total of over 230 species of plant, we didn't have much time to look for birds!

Ellie Mitchell

GRIMSTON

Saturday 11th August, 2001

Leader: Gillian Beckett

More than 20 people gathered at Grimston for a closer look at arable and wayside plants with Gillian Beckett - the fourth 'Wildflowers revealed' meeting.

When we met on the verge which Gillian had chosen for us to explore, we found that it had been recently trimmed, so we moved on to another a short distance away. The road dipped down to our new parking space and Gillian explained that in this area the richest flora is to be found on slopes where erosion has left the chalk closer to the surface. With us we had a good number of people who really knew their plants and we split into small, rather fluid groups, with people drifting from one to another if something caught their eye. Although this was the 'second

choice' verge, we were rewarded with a very diverse flora. The more experienced botanists were able to point out the differences between species which might cause confusion to the beginner. All three "possible" sowthistles were there - Perennial - *Sonchus arvensis*, Prickly - *S. asper* and Common - *S. oleraceus*. We also found ribwort, greater and hoary plantains - *Plantago lanceolata*, *P. major* and *P. media*, respectively which we were able to compare. Common knapweed *Centaurea nigra* and greater knapweed *C. scabiosa* also grew close enough together to allow easy comparison.

The gateway and unsprayed corner of a sugarbeet field proved to be a wonderful hunting ground and we could have quite happily spent a few hours there. 'Gems' from this spot included the beautiful little venus - looking - glass *Legousia hybrida*, night-flowering catchfly *Silene noctiflora* and Flixweed *Dascurainia sophia*, with its finely divided leaves. These were special treats for those of us from the heavy soils of East Norfolk where those plants are rarely found. These less widely distributed plants were growing alongside an enormous number of more common (but none-the-less lovely) species such as scarlet pimpernel *Anagallis arvensis*, field pansy *Viola arvensis*, white campion *Silene alba* and pineapple weed *Matricaria discoidea*. We were able to compare cut-leaved dead-nettle *Lamium hybridum* and red dead-nettle *L. purpureum*.

Eventually we dragged ourselves away from this little patch and walked the length of the roadside verge to the top of the hill before returning to the cars for our lunch. This verge produced Canadian fleabane *Conyza canadensis*, a plant, introduced from North America, that was first recorded in Norfolk in 1882 near Thetford and has now extended its range to such an extent that it seems to turn up almost anywhere, even Blakeney Point!

After lunch we drove off and parked at the beginning of a wide track which leads through farmland to an area known as Massingham Heath. We found many interesting plants on and beside the track. Many of these were 'firsts' for a lot of us. We discovered small scabious *Scabiosa columbaria*, another speciality of light calcareous soils, and we were able to compare it with the field scabios *Knautia scabiosa* which we had seen on the roadside verge. Further on a cornfield had a sign stating that it was 'Organic' and we were interested to see that the crop had been undersown with a large cultivated form of the common vetch *Vicia sativa* ssp *sativa* - presumably as a nitrogen fixer. There were plants of interest all along the track and it is only possible to mention a few. The long-headed poppy *Papaver dubium*, musk mallow *Malva moschata*, harebell *Campanula rotundifolia*, large thyme *Thymus pulegioides* and the common rock rose *Helianthemum nummularium* were among our more note-worthy finds. The excitement of finding new things stayed with us right to the end. On the way back, in the corner of a stubble field we were delighted to find annual wall rocket (who called it stinkweed?) *Diplotaxis muralis*, small toadflax *Chaenorhinum minus*, grey field speedwell *Veronica polita*, field madder *Sherardia arvensis* and the diminutive dwarf spurge *Euphorbia exigua*.

As we gathered at the cars someone produced a tiny bit of catmint *Nepeta cataria*, a scarce plant, which seemed to be the 'icing on the cake'.

Our thanks go to Gillian for a really memorable day during which more than 150 species were identified.



Janet Negal

SNETTISHAM RESERVE

Sunday 16th September, 2001

Leaders: Frances Schumann
and David Lake

The meeting at Snettisham RSPB Reserve was timed for an evening high tide of 6.8 metres, the lowest high tide which will usually cover the mudflats and push waders onto the pits, and we hoped to see one of this country's greatest wildlife spectacles. The Wash is the most important estuary in the UK for wildfowl and waders and at peak times more than 100,000 birds can be found on Snettisham Reserve making it the most important part of the Wash. The forecast all week for Sunday had been to expect bursts of heavy showers, but in the event, luckily for the 9 participants, the rain kept away.

The Reserve consists of a string of disused gravel pits, the foreshore, and an area of marsh at the southern end, some of which is grazed, with hides overlooking the southernmost pit. Water levels in the pits remained high until late May this year, a recurring problem of recent years, which affects the ability of terns and black-headed gulls to breed on the islands, and it is hoped that this autumn an additional large diameter pipe will be installed to help control water levels.

Along the shore yellow horned-poppy *Glaucium flavum* and Viper's-bugloss *Echium vulgare*, were still in flower. As we walked towards the hides the flocks of waders were building up on the mud, oystercatchers, large numbers of knot, some still in summer colouring; a flock of grey plover collected in an area to the north of the old pier, and hundreds of golden plover to the south. A small flock of linnet foraged in the debris along the tide-line. Large numbers of teal were out on the mud, with wigeon and shelduck. As the tide advanced and less and

less mud remained available, flocks of oystercatchers came lighting in and over the pit banks onto the roost banks and spits of the southernmost pit. Suddenly a vast cloud of thousands of knot (10,000?) came nearer, wheeling and re-forming, like clouds of smoke, seemingly with bar-tailed godwit bounding one edge of the flock. The vast bulk of the knot soon disappeared, perhaps to Gore Point at Holme and not onto the pit roost banks, parts of which, although cleared of some vegetation, were still grass-covered.

There were many highlights that afternoon: the first sighting this season (for me) of pink-footed geese - 32 - with their soft 'talking' calls; a marsh harrier far over along the sea-bank; grasshoppers in the long grass by the footpath - one at least was a lesser marsh grasshopper *Chorthippus albomarginatus*, and a common lizard slithering away. The view from Shore hide onto the furthest pit gave oystercatchers and cormorants, several hundred redshank, and large numbers of black-tailed godwit. We found 1 scaup there, said to be one of 3 or 4 around at the moment, a single great-crested grebe, many little grebe, only 1 gadwall, a striking leucistic redshank, and 2 adult common terns which had nested on one of the islands, with 2 young chicks: then as we returned to the shore, the fine sight of a flock of hundreds of golden plover, still partly coloured in summer plumage tuning and glinting in the sun.

After the long walk back we approached the area of rough grassland and a barn owl hunted over the grass and then perched on a fence. The final count of species was 57, none rare, but we felt well rewarded by the sight of large flocks of waders tumbling and wheeling against the sky.



Frances Schumann

Natural History Day at Wheatfen

With fine weather, which seems to have been a sparse commodity for much of this year, and a good attendance, the Natural History Day (29th July 2001) at Wheatfen was a great success. Ken Durrant's wonderful display of insects was particularly popular. Many thanks Ken.

Thanks too to Robert Maidstone (wasps etc.), Francis Farrow (mayflies), Rex and Barbara Hancy (galls), David Richmond (grasshoppers and crickets) and Derek Howlett (moths) for their fine displays. Also to David Paull for ruining the society "stand", Roy Baker for pond dipping, Alec Bull, Paul Banham and David Lester for leading walks and everyone else who pitched in.

It was particularly good to see such a mixture of long-standing members, new members and non-members and also to have young people showing such an interest. I'm sure the day did a great deal to promote the study of natural history, as well as serving as something of a social event.

One spin-off from this gathering of naturalists was that several new records were made from the reserve, which must already be one of the best-recorded places in the county. One such record was a ditiscid beetle, found by Geoff Nobes, that glories in the name of *Strictotarsus duodecimpustulatus*.

David Nobbs & Bob Ellis

Stop press....

August 29th 2001: The 'Eastern Daily Press' reported the first Norfolk sighting of Small Red-eyed Damselfly from a North Norfolk pond.

October 6th 2001: The 'Daily Express' reported the discovery of a bee new to Britain - *Bombus hypnorum* - which was found on the northern edge of the New Forest.

EAST ANGLIAN BRYOLOGICAL EXCURSIONS

2001
to
2002

The following excursions are planned for the Autumn & Spring of 2001 - 2002. Beginners will be most welcome; the only equipment needed is a hand lens (x 10 or x 20), and some paper packets for collecting into. Meetings will only be cancelled if it snows, or there is hard frost. All meetings will start at 10.30 am, unless otherwise stated. For further information, contact one of the names below.

Sunday 28 October: Blakeney Parish mainland, ditto first meeting. Meet at Blakeney Church, access from the Blakeney to Holt road, TG 033 436. We can then go south to Wiveton Downs in the afternoon.

Sunday 11 November: Knettishall Heath Country Park, meet in car park by toilet block. TL 956 807. Sign posted from A1066 at TL 957 820.

Saturday 24 November: Weeting Heath, NNR & NWT reserve. Meet in car park at TL 756 881.

Sunday 16 December: Honing Common. We briefly recorded here this year but there are four commons and possibly Crostwick Common as well. Meet on triangle of grass at TG 328 274.

Saturday 5 January: Winterton Dunes, meet in Winterton Beach car park, TG 499 198. Parking fee.

Sunday 20 January: Hickling Broad, NNR & NWT reserve, meet in car park at TG 428 222.

Saturday 2 February: Bloom's of Bressingham, Bressingham. Meet in the car park, TM 081 808.

Sunday 17 February: Horsey Mere & Horsey Gap, National Trust, meet in car park at TG 456 223. (fee possible?)

Saturday 2 March: How Hill Trust reserve, meet in the top car park behind the house at TG 373 190.

Sunday 10 March: NNNS meeting, 11.00 am. Full-day field meeting for mosses at Hockering Wood. Meet at entrance on 'one-way' lane at north edge of wood, TG 072 150. Leader: Robin Stevenson.

Wednesday 13 March - Wednesday 20 March: BBS Spring Meeting, Isle of Wight

Sunday 24 March: Swannington Upgate Common. Park on road side at TG 142 183

30/31 March, Easter

Saturday 6 April: Scarning Fen, NWT reserve & Rush Meadow. Parking at Scarning is difficult; best to park on verges at TF 980 123, before/after the bend in the road. For Rush Meadow, park at TG 977 136 by sewage works

Sunday 21 April: Swanton Novers Great Wood NNR. Meet at 'phone box in Swanton Novers village, TG 020 322. The warden, Robert Baker, will lead us into the wood.

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NNNS INDOOR MEETINGS

Nov 2001 - Jan 2002

To be held at Room 7, The Sports and Leisure Centre, Easton College, Easton, Norwich. 7.30 p.m.

Tuesday 20 November

"Climate change and nature conservation"

Irene Lorenzoni and Trudie Docherty

Tuesday 18 December

"Forty years of Survival"

Mike Linley

*Festive refreshments will be provided.
Please note that members will be invited to
make a small voluntary contribution
towards the cost of these.*

Tuesday 15 January

"Madagascar: a world apart"

Simon Harrap

HOLT LOWES REPORT NO. 2

The second report of the Holt Lowes Wildlife Group is now published. It includes articles on birds, reptiles, liverworts, glow-worms, fungi and soil and water pH measurements, and updates on dragonflies, moths and flowering plants, as well as a selection of colour photographs.

Copies are available, at £5 including p&p (cheques payable to "Gresham's School Natural History Society"), from Dr. A.R. Leech, Gresham's School, Cromer Road, Holt, Norfolk, NR25 6EA (copies of the first report, at the same price, are also available).

Simon Harrap

50 YEARS AGO

(Transactions Vol. XVII, page 221)

Salt-marsh Horse-fly

During the second week of August 1951, the large horse-fly *Tabanus nigrifacies* (Gobert) was common at Scolt Head Island. The females attacked visitors incessantly during sunny weather and the males were seen to visit flowers of common sea lavender on the flats. This species had not been recorded previously from Norfolk and it may be a recent colonist.

E. A. Ellis

A note to CONTRIBUTORS.

The next 'Natterjack' will be in February. It would be much appreciated if any correspondence or disc could be sent to the editor at the following address, *as soon as possible by Jan 7th 2002*, or by e-mail to: francis.f@virgin.net

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